The
Walter Hines Page Library
Randolph-Macon College
Ashland, Virginia

THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

AN INQUIRY INTO AMERICAN LIFE

By ROLLO WALTER BROWN

Author of "HOW THE FRENCH BOY LEARNS TO WRITE," "THE WRITER'S ART," Etc.

Discarde

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK 1925 LONDON

917.3
B879

+

THE CREATIVE SPIRIT

Copyright, 1925
By Harper & Brothers
Printed in the U. S. A.

F-Z

TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

WHO

FEARED NOT TO ENCOURAGE

THEIR SONS

IN THE HAZARD OF NEW PATHS

2462

CONTENTS

	PREFACE	ix
I.	INTRODUCTORY	1
II.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND CONDUCT	23
III.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH	57
IV.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND EDUCATION	87
V.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE INDUSTRIAL SCHEME	121
VI.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND SCIENCE	153
VII.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND ART	177
VIII.	THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC	205

PREFACE

THIS book discusses the importance of men's inclination to pioneer, to invent, to take apart their surroundings—and even their own inner lives—and reshape them into something significantly new. To many, it must seem flagrantly obvious that if we are to have the political and social progress and the development of the humane arts about which we speak so vehemently, we shall have them only by a right fostering of whatever creative-mindedness we may possess. Yet in America, where we boast of being especially concerned with progress, creative-mindedness is usually neglected, it is often positively stifled, and it is not infrequently treated as a symptom of grave disorder. Now if we really are concerned with the increased well-being of ourselves and our progeny, and with the prospect of a more interesting world in which to live, ought we not to think a little about liberating this creative-mindedness which is our ultimate human ground of hope?

R. W. B.

I: INTRODUCTORY

In the name of God, stop a moment,
cease your work, look around you . . .

—Tolstoy

I: INTRODUCTORY

I

WHAT does one mean by the creative spirit, and what is its significance in life? Is it anything potent enough to bear a relation to social unrest, industrial warfare, the obstreperousness of the younger generation, the world's attitude toward religion, or the public's indifference to art?

We can best approach an answer to these questions by observing what a creator does. A creator takes life apart—his own mental life included—and puts it together again in new arrangements. More accurately, he dissociates some part of life and then reassociates some of the fragments with others in his possession so that the result is something new and unified and important. Sometimes two bits of life that are utterly colorless and inconsequential when standing apart become startling and momentous when brought together. If just the right units enter into the computation, the whole may be infinitely more significant than the sum of its parts.

A mechanically inventive person sees a windstorm in the country rolling the hay diagonally across the field, and he designs an escalator which, when it has carried us from the Subway to the surface of the earth, squeezes us diagonally off into the street. An architect who is steeped in the beauty of the cathedral tower and who is reminded daily of the value of space in the downtown section of the city, puts the two ideas together and produces a new skyscraper that is a contribution to the history of mankind. The cartoonist smilingly disengages certain of the qualities expressed in the face of the over-eager politician, and by increasing their degree, their power, at the expense of other qualities, enables us to see sharply a hungriness for approval and a flabby unctuousness which we had passed over in our less imaginative ways of looking. The novelist catches some glimpse of the chivalry in his neighborhood, or the grim heroism in his own family, or possibly his own response in a crisis, and by a similar increasing of the power, plus the trick of transference, ascribes interestingly proportioned romantic qualities to the hero he puts in his story. The poet goes farther, at least at times, and draws upon flashes of experience

beyond ordinary daily reach, and designs from them new forms of truth beyond ordinary expression. But whether we call it a knack for doing things, as the workman does, or a subliminal uprush, as the psychologist does, or an inspiration of genius, as the poet does, really matters little; in all of these instances the fundamental imaginative process is the same. Elements are taken away from their accustomed associations and brought into others where they have new and multiplied significance.

But what the creator does is no more important than the experience he has while he is doing it. The spirit that enables men to climb above the stuffiness of low levels is more than a denuded machine-like power; it is a way of life. The creator has, for instance, a way, or ways, of looking at things; he experiences a state of feeling that enables him to make the most of what he sees; and he presides with a certain victorious attitude over the tantalizing processes which finally result in the new creation.

To the sophisticated, the creator's manner of looking at things is likely to seem naïve; for the creator sees with something of the wondering welcome of the child. In order to have this

wonder, one must possess a capacity to startle oneself out of slavery to the obvious. There must be some such state of detachment as we experience when we awake from outdoor slumber on a hilltop at noonday. We are fully in the presence of the world: the sky is above our face; we hear sounds that we have heard every day of our lives; and the distant green hills that we can see over the tops of our cheeks are real hills. Yet momentarily, before we shake ourselves and catch up the current of consciousness where we left off ten or twenty minutes earlier, before the sights and sounds merge once more into the familiar, we live in a double world. We have an advantage over the wayfarer from some other planet who might drop in upon us, for we may have a glimpse of the new world while abiding in the old one. That is the manner in which the creator sees. If he should see only as he has seen before, there would be little opportunity for him to break up his experience into new combinations.

The creator must see, moreover, without hardened preconception or sullen disillusionment. He must not only be able to see, but be willing to see. There is always hope that those who do not see because of stolidity may enjoy the shock of

a desperate awakening, like an icy plunge in mid-ocean. But for the man who has completed his system of philosophy, not only in the letter but in the spirit, all fruitful seeing is gone. "I am determined to see only a 'glad' world," says one. "If I see anything else, I won't believe it." Clearly, no such person may hope to find life resolving itself into anything which possesses new significance. Or, "Where is this mysterious, interesting world you like to talk about? I haven't seen anything of it! Here we are, like rats in a trap, with nothing left to do but try futilely to escape." From this person, likewise, who usually has looked for the grossest side of life, but has always demanded a refined recollection of it, the creator stands far removed. The creator may have a closed mind on certain subjects—most of us have—but on the parts of the universe with which he is chiefly concerned, he must look with an intelligent readiness to believe.

But the creator's state of feeling is quite as important as his open-eyed, open-minded seeing. He enjoys mental whiteness of heat. He sees with sympathy, or with benevolent doubt, or with affection, or with devotion, or with awe, or with some other emotional quickening that is capable

of luring him farther than would any purely rational, measured process of mind. One man who visits the home of a poet remarks with unwarmed pleasantness: "He kept a good-looking lilac hedge, didn't he?" And a little later, "That third story is a funny little business stuck there under the roof, isn't it?" Another approaches the grounds in silent modesty. "You must pardon my appearance of sentimentality," he explains, "but I have always found something prophetic in this man's works, and I cannot enter these grounds without uncovering." From the visit of the two, the first man carries away a certain number of photographic facts. But the second carries away all of the facts, multiplied indefinitely by the emotional warmth which he brought with him. For an entire day—and probably for an entire week—his mind is constantly reverting to this poet: to what he had thought the poet meant in such and such descriptive lines, and to what he now believes is a better interpretation; to the function of poetry in a democracy; to the poet's power to insinuate himself into a position that no one could gain by frontal assault; and to the strain of poetry which he believes is in all of us when we are honest with ourselves and

receptive. He exemplifies what William James meant when he said that, despite the accepted dogma that love is blind, Jill is not justly estimated by a disinterested observer, but by Jack, who loves her.[1]

If we stop to reflect, we can see that emotional quickening guides us into all sorts of pioneering. We usually do not sit down in cold blood and reason that we ought to undertake some kind of creative work. If we do, no one is likely to be interested in the result of our labors. The "want" gives the creation life. Children of healthy habits often "want" to make something, to invent, to write, to paint, to compose, long before they have anything of importance to express in any of these ways. The emotional has clearly preceded the intellectual, as it well may do. Rational-minded elders laugh such children out of countenance, or try to turn them toward some "recognized" activity by telling them that when they are old enough to have anything to say, the time will be ripe to begin. Yet the children, provided their experience is genuine and not merely a suggested whim, are unwittingly the wiser. They are experiencing something of the emotional readiness of the scientist who confessed that he was frequently

[1] *On Some of Life's Ideals*, p. 50.

startled into his best experimentation by some thrilling scene in a movie or by some particularly wild detective story.

But there is another service that sufficient emotional quickening renders: it acts as a sublime stabilizer of the judgment. Contrary to what we are usually told, the great decisions of life are not made in the quiet of prosaic stupor. They are made in that emotional warmth in which one perceives factors that the safe mind would have failed wholly to observe. The better part of a century ago, judicial-minded men, aided by henchmen who could be rallied to their support, defeated a Middle Western congressman for reelection on the platform that he had voted away the people's good money to a man who wanted "to tinker with a wire to see whether he could talk over it or not." And within my own brief years I have heard judicial-minded scientists "prove" that an airplane would always fall at a geometrical increase of speed while it was proceeding horizontally only at an arithmetical increase, and consequently would never be able to remain in the air. But some of their fellows lost their heads to such good effect as to prove that if there is sometimes foolishness in enthusi-

asm, there is also absurdity in the judicial mind. Of course, a man is least likely to err when he is tucked away in bed and soundly asleep. Yet with all of his chasing of will-o'-the-wisps, the decisions he makes when he is awake seem to count for more.

Now when anyone sees clearly and with a degree of detachment, and approaches life with a little emotional glow, he may well be expected to work without humiliation, and frequently with a high-pitched joy. This, sooner or later, the creator does. He works with what certain psychologists have called the victorious attitude. Instances to the contrary may at first thought seem numerous, but when we examine them we find that they do not disprove the point at all. It is true that when city-bred cousins gather round a timid, awkward country boy, they cannot imagine that he would ever invent a motor which he would risk having anyone see in the full light of day. And when people gather round a poet who can scarcely talk to them coherently, it may seem that he would never have confidence enough to write a poem. But it is usually forgotten that the boy and the poet are not timid when they are buried in the heat of their work. The boy

is quite at ease in the loft or shed where he is devising his motor, and the poet is quite as much at home in his study with a few scraps of paper before him. Despite all initial misgivings, the creator eventually works as though he expected to realize his dream. He is intent. His mind is not inhibited into dumb neutrality by any fear of making wrong decisions. In the secrecy of his heart, he believes that what he is attempting may add a little to the totality of things. And as he progresses, it becomes more and more evident to him that he is on the right road, his timidity is thrown to the winds, and he presides for the moment like a god over this little corner of the infinite which has revealed itself to him, and which in just this manner has revealed itself to none before him.

Reasonably enough, this person may be expected to show an inclination toward good humor. Far be it from me to risk the generalization that all creative workers are forever wreathed in smiles! But they do possess a negative or a positive good humor which they cannot have when they are denied creative work. The resolution of their problem brings a satisfying release. It

is characteristic of the creator that he has taken all of the chances and—in some degree—won. Why should he not experience an inner satisfaction? In this respect, the child, the inventor, and the poet are of one company. If the toy works, if the new type of motor "slips together with a click," if some day the evasive fancy comes easily to one's pen, it is fitting to take time joyously off, to look with cheerful sympathy upon everyone else who struggles, to feel that the existing order is a good one, whatever it happens to be. To be sure, if one has been long in the intimacy of the struggle, there may be also some melancholy, some revulsion of feeling; but always some little part of the spirit that went into the work remains to console or beguile one.

To all those who ceaselessly fear that the ego will run away with mankind in the lump, it will be heartening to know that in this hopeful experience there is a trace of humility. The creator knows, from occasional clairvoyant glimpses of the ideal, that his work is far from perfect and that he himself has not been wholly responsible for it. Like a general who has won a battle, he knows how nearly he came to utter failure when he was on the way to success. He has learned

that sometimes the ease of the journey cajoles him into assuming falsely that he has gone far. He has learned, too, how modest one's capacities are, and how necessary it is that one live through periods of inactivity and routine, in order to make accumulations for going forward. If he chances to be informed on certain historic matters, he remembers that it was only after the founder of a well-known era had restrained himself that angels came and ministered unto him.

It is in some such manner that the creator constantly resolves and remakes his world, and in some such manner that he experiences life as he works. If his will to create is strong, and if he is permitted to exercise his creative abilities without too much obstruction, he shapes some part of the world in accordance with the best of his own spirit, and by living through his alternating periods of loss of consciousness of self and glowing, free, new consciousness of self, he becomes in some degree a creature of new perfection.

II

Any attempt to inquire into the creative spirit is certain to give rise to a number of incidental

considerations. For our purposes some of these are wholly irrelevant. But at least two or three of them touch so closely the essential character of creative work that they must receive passing attention.

The first of these is the fact, now sustained by psychology, that the power to create varies only in degree. Inherently it is the same, wherever it manifests itself and with whatever material it works. This conception, to be sure, runs counter to popular conception, which puts creative workers into carefully graded, clearly labeled, water-tight compartments. It is reasoned, plausibly enough, that because "poets are born, not made," a poet must therefore be different from all other persons who are "born" also. But how would such a strait-laced conception explain men's giving up architecture or interior decorating or the organizing of a fascinating mercantile establishment, in order to become poets? Or how would it deal with such a versatile creator as Leonardo da Vinci, who seems to have engaged in almost every creative occupation from the painting of religious pictures to the building of engines of war? Or how would it deal with the fact that there are different grades

of poets, and that it is not easy to tell whether some "poets" are really poets or prose-writers? Sometimes it requires a century or two to make certain! As a matter of fact, a thread of inventive ability runs through all writing. An intelligent copyist can "restore" a lost phrase or sentence; a newspaper cub occasionally gives himself over to the devising of startling audacities; an expository-minded professor sometimes reveals in his treatises a little of the sunshine on the willows; and the mellow essayist writes prose that by chance needs only to be rearranged in lines in order to be mistaken for poetry.

No sharp line of demarcation can be made at any point in the scale. And what is more, this scale extends quite below those who possess enough inventiveness to be thought of generally as creators. So close are the pioneering, constructive impulses to the onward moving which is life itself, that it is doubtful whether any "normal" human being goes through a lifetime wholly without inclination to add to the totality of things in some spiritually satisfying way. Often we can catch a glimpse of the wide distribution of this spirit by noticing the stretches over which it recognizes itself. The attachment may be be-

tween playwrights and picturesquely inventive cow-punchers who have a sense of the romantic; between architects who design churches and farmers who decide, despite financial loss, to let the maples grow along the meadow side; between scientific discoverers and boys who have "become excited" about music; between civil engineers who incidentally write stories and coal miners who incidentally read political philosophy; between poets who glorify the mountains and unlettered grandmothers who have a way of making a bare room look occupied and "tidy." Despite the artificial classifications accepted so widely, these know that they are one in spirit, that they are of the company.

The other incidental consideration which may well claim attention is this: up to the limit of one's personal endowment—which is not often reached—creative tendencies may be invigorated and ennobled. Especially since the Great War have we heard much about the inferior endowment of our race. We are continually reminded that we are badly off, if the intelligence tests mean anything. But after these tests have received due credit, it must be said that so far as mankind in general is concerned, they only tell us in

a new way what we already know—namely, that some of us are not so intelligent as others. All the questions they raise, all the questions raised by the noisy "just meat" philosophers, need not add one new alarm to our lives. To begin with, we need not accept matters at their worst unless we like. But even if we do, there is every reason to believe that much can be accomplished. It is an appalling yet hopeful fact that in America the morons are the only class who have been developed to the limit of their "potential." If all of the creative intelligence that we do possess were released so that it might go to work, we could transform the world into something intelligible and beautiful, and we could encourage the human spirit to be less hateful and less ugly than it now is.

III

The discussion which follows is twofold. It will first consider the influence of the creative spirit on conduct. How, for example, does the repression of this onward impulse toward pioneering affect a man's feeling toward himself and his fellows? How, on the other hand, is a man's

conduct affected by a relatively unobstructed exercise of this impulse? Does it modify the ordinary acts of his daily life? Does it affect his attitude toward a reconstituted social and spiritual world? Does it influence him so that what he touches is more seemly, and so that his life constantly overflows into the significant beauty which we call art?

The second, longer part of the discussion, will consider the ways in which institutions relate themselves to a normal expression of the creative spirit. The creators are those who in some degree are starting new movements, new variations. Institutions, by their very nature, tend to reduce variations. A given institution may have had originally the purpose of perpetuating a virile idea, but in the process of making itself secure in order to perpetuate the idea the better, it may have attained to an importance of its own that has left the idea more or less forgotten. On the other hand, institutions in preserving themselves preserve also the past, without which the individual is well-nigh hopeless. He has nothing to stand upon, nothing to rise from. Ribot, in speaking of a certain dependence of the imagi-

nation on the past, expresses the individual's helplessness concretely:

" 'Let us suppose,' Weismann says justly, 'that in the Samoan Islands there had been born a child having the unique and extraordinary genius of Mozart. What would he be able to do? At most, extend the gamut of three or four tones to seven, and create melodies a little more complicated; but he would be as incapable of composing symphonies as Archimedes would have been to invent an electric dynamo.' How many creators have been thwarted because the conditions necessary to their inventions were lacking. Roger Bacon foresaw many of our great discoveries; Cardan, the infinitesimal calculus; Van Helmont, chemistry; and it has been possible to write a book on the forerunners of Darwin. All of this is well known, but it deserves to be recalled to mind. We talk so much of the free flight of the imagination, of the absolute power of the creator, that we forget the sociological conditions (not to mention others) on which this power at every instant depends." [1]

So there must be in institutions a readiness to

[1] Th. Ribot: *Essai sur l'Imagination créatrice.* Sixième édition, p. 128.

preserve the past in such a way as to make it a benevolent atmosphere for new growth. We shall see, then, how organized religion, organized education, organized industry, organized science, organized art, and organized public opinion affect such growth, and whether it would be possible or wise to have them affect it in any other way.

II: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND CONDUCT

Having all liberty, didst keep all measure.
—FRANCIS THOMPSON.

II: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND CONDUCT

I

If we are to look with human interest at the relation of the creative spirit and conduct, we must do our utmost to avoid the quagmire of controversial psychology. The field of psychology has been so violently overrun, and the factions that possess the different parts of the field are so jealous of their possessions, including their terminology, that one may not use any of the traditional words of the science without being looked upon by some one either as an ignoramus or as a partisan. If by chance a man speaks of consciousness, he is certain to be reminded that consciousness is old-fashioned; if through a normal acquaintance with the English language he chances to speak of the mental faculties, he is warned that they do not exist—as such; if he speaks of instincts or instinctive action, he is cautioned that these terms are scientifically very vague. It is even doubtful whether there is any

such thing as conduct. If life has not been multiplied into a maze that baffles movement—or even thought—in any direction, then it has been reduced to a simple process of stimulus and response; although it is not just clear why there should be any stimulus—or any response!

Especially have certain distant relatives of Freud cluttered up the field for the lay mind. It is not my intention at all to belittle their work, for they have done much to focus attention on biological considerations that should have had attention long ago. But the behavioristic philosophy—if it may be so called—that has filtered through from high places to places less high has had an amazing variety of interpretations. It has served as a justification for every physical excess, for the expression of hatred of one's kind, and for miscellaneous moral dirtiness. It has, furthermore, been used as a plausible justification for all sorts of mental and social quackery. A man in evening dress gives a quasi-scientific explanation of the nerve centers in the hind leg of a frog, and deftly deduces therefrom the only "scientific" method of dealing with the I. W. W. Of course, no scientific cult can be held responsible for everything that is done and its name;

but it does happen that behaviorism, either through unwholesome examples or through overzealous proponents who would reduce everything to a madman's simplicity, has been so variously interpreted for the popular mind, that the only sure fact left is that we are just so much meat, and pretty coarse meat at that.

We shall do well, then, to keep away from alignment in a controversy in which the best informed disagree violently. And, after all, who can really tell us whether the ultimate moving spirit of human life resulted from the flowing together, the integrating, of such instincts as sex, pugnacity, hunting, and the like, or whether, on the other hand, some strong pull toward something never clearly comprehended has perpetuated these as a means to an end?

If, then, we put out of the way all temptation to look through highly partisan, technically adjusted eyes, and try to think as clearly as possible of conduct as the whole manner in which a man inclines to express his relation to his surroundings, what is the question of conduct and the creative spirit? In so far as we know anything, what do we know about it, or what can we ascertain without losing ourselves in over-

abstruse study? Granted that in the more favored of our race, if not in all who may reasonably be regarded as normal, an irreducible part of the onward moving of life is the creative spirit, the imperious tendency to add in one's unique way to the totality of things, what results when this spirit is repressed, and what results when it is given its own way or is positively encouraged?

II

So far as repression is concerned, we can, if we will, see its effects without entering a laboratory or joining a crusade against vice in the slums. Sometimes I play with a five-year-old boy who busies himself for hours at a time with the devising of new machines out of a set of meccano. Occasionally I am unfair enough to usurp all of the planning and building myself. He looks on for a time and makes suggestions which I do not heed. If I continue to disregard him long enough, he acts in one of two ways. Either he becomes languid and flops his body backward over his feet from his accustomed kneeling position on the floor, and begins to imagine that he is hungry or thirsty, or he watches me restlessly

for a time as I work, and then with one fell swoop, and with a laughing shout that has something of the demoniacal in it, he scraps whatever I have built.

The case of the adult is not different. If we study the young architect who was compelled to give up his dream in order to manage his father's shoe factory; or the young painter whose domestic obligations have forced him into the selling of paving bricks; or the young lady who aspired to be a beautifier of cities, but whose parents nagged her into "recognizing her social position and not descending from it;" or any of the other countless instances that we may observe of men and women who know that they are thwarted in what they wish most to do, yet who must work on and suffer—we can find evidence that would satisfy anyone, except those who refuse to be satisfied, that the curbing of the creative spirit has a tragic bearing on men's conduct.

The man who comes to feel that he can never achieve a "destiny" begins to discover a multitude of claims which he must make on somebody else. A more fortunate mortal, who feels that he is one of the company of real persons and can take destiny in hand—a characteristic experience

of the creator—will forget many of his individual inclinations to action, or will subordinate them, or will sublimate them until they lose much of their original character. This man who is engrossed in some enterprise of high or modest invention, who "carries something around in his own head," is not greatly disturbed about petty needs and desires. In truth, he often sacrifices what some men would regard as the most imperious of all needs in the greater glory of an achievement that he and the world somehow look upon as high. But the man who is in any manner denied the right to undertake this high achievement finds that all of his clamoring instincts must have large attention. After they have received it, he still feels the utter futility of his experience. The godlike joy of modifying the universe in some small way according to his own highest promptings, he is not permitted to taste. Consequently, he cannot feel that he is a man among men. Despite our habit of laughing at the "inferiority complex" as a subject for vaudeville entertainment, such a man suffers from one that is unmistakably serious. The extent to which his turning to ways of destruction or ways of satiation may be a conscious process, is but a

partly relevant question. The matter of importance is that he does turn. If he is sufficiently stifled, either he "lets loose" in some expression of revolt, or he develops fatty degeneration by attempting to satisfy individual instincts.

In the repression that terminates in revolt, we have a right explanation of the present-day uprising of the "underman." It is pleasant enough to say that the uprising results from the underman's low-grade intelligence and his consequent inability to comprehend civilization, which he would therefore destroy; it is pleasant enough to say that the only way to change conditions is by breeding the underman out of existence through enforced eugenics—a method, as anyone may see, that is perfectly simple of application as long as the underman has as much of a vote in the matter as anybody else! But is there anyone among those who have a sympathetic knowledge of all classes of society who believes either in the force of this explanation or in the unaided remedy proposed for the ill? When, however, we reflect upon the manner in which the individual is influenced by the thwarting of his very essential inclinations toward spiritual pioneering, it is easy enough to see why the underman is

revolting. Although his social standing has remained unchanged—that is, he is at the bottom of the pyramid—he has, throughout the Western world, and especially in America, been zealously educated to a higher sensitiveness than he ever before experienced. Now repression does not affect most acutely the dull, passive, unthinking mind, but the one which has become acute and sensitive. So the underman is revolting not because he is unable to comprehend civilization, but because he comprehends it too well. He feels the agony of being unable to participate in it in any satisfying manner.

Those who would seek to discredit this view may say that, after all, economic standing is an unvarying true index of a man's creative capacity; that all studies of "men of distinction," and the like, show that least intelligence is always revealed at the bottom of the social scale.[1] Undoubtedly the percentage of high intelligence, creative intelligence, is lower among the social classes that are least fortunate. But if one dare risk illuminating this problem by turning to some of the concrete cases which make it up, one can

[1] Already such use is being made of the study published in *Who's Who in America* for 1924-25.

see that much of the difference between the lower classes and the higher is not an inherent one, but only an incidental variation. How does it come to pass that unskilled laborers destined by the statisticians to be the parents of so few children of distinction, discover that a sudden turn of fortune which gives them the rank of skilled laborers, and consequently a somewhat different social outlook, also gives them a larger percentage of children of distinction? Or why does a boy whose family for generations has been treated as of low-grade intelligence and of no intellectual interests whatever, suddenly blossom forth as a distinguished pupil in high school when the amputation of a leg obliges him to remain more regularly within the scholastic precincts? Or how is it possible for one modest state university not only to convert thousands of coal miners and other petty "hillikins" into teachers, scientists, justices in the high courts, architects, artists, and others of those classes commonly thought to require either mental vigor or positive creative power, but also to change the entire spiritual outlook of the region from which they emanated?

Among men and women who possess such pos-

sibilities of a higher mental life, there are inevitably some to whom repression is agony. If such creative ability as they possess is not expressed in some right "extension of self-feeling," the revolt of the underman will be continuous and extensive; for the intelligent souls who suffer have a fellow-feeling for their less sensitive associates and communicate the feeling of revolt to them. It may be possible to repress one generation into acquiescence. But there is a persistence in the impulses of life that will not end with an individual or a generation. A man may be broken in spirit so completely that he plods on in a stupor of futility or in the sullenness of hate, but his children, from the hour of their birth, begin all over again the imperious quest for opportunities to dissociate life and make it into satisfying new arrangements. The stream of life possesses this power of renewing its vigor whenever it appears in a new body. So any thwarting of men's tendencies to grow by pioneering, any effort to make men be calm and "reasonable" when they are quickened more and more by education, will only bear the fruitage of revolt as long as men are on the earth. We may expect just that, and nothing less.

But what happens if the repression is not of the kind which produces this starvation, but, instead, a not disagreeable smothering? A man is sometimes prevented from being a creator—or any kind of real producer—by being constantly baited into becoming a consumer. Just how does this man's lot differ from that of the man who cannot create because he is always on some kind of physical or spiritual treadmill? Is he any better off? When a man has had the fortune to be urged to partake of an abundance, so that he is free to give his thoughts to the clamorings of his instincts, and to a satisfaction of them, is he really satisfied? The tragedy of his case is that he is not. He is no more permanently satisfied than the man who is perpetually repressed through starvation. And he interprets his dissatisfaction to mean that if only he became a greater consumer, he would feel that his attainment had been genuine. So he races back and forth over the face of the earth from Florida to Alaska, and from California to the Riviera, trying to find life that has enough "kick." If he were ever to reflect, he would see that the philosophy of Omar Khayyam is a bad one if for no other reason than that it ultimately fails to work.

But strangely enough, he persists in looking at life as if it were wholly a process of consuming. Why should he bother with exercise when he has the money with which to employ an osteopath? Why should he go to the trouble of entering into a game as a participant when he can sit in the shade and watch somebody else whom he has paid to be amusing? "Is not life just what a man can get out of it? Wasn't this world made to supply our wants? And I have many. I am a being of instincts; I must never forget that." And upon his successful remembering, the scheme of his life is planned.

Socially, the man of this kind who has never known the satisfaction of creative work contributes no more than the man who revolts. Sometimes he contributes less—except to the spirit of revolt in others. He becomes a member of the non-producing class which has no concern for the character of its non-production. He gravitates to those tens of thousands who manipulate the prices of real estate, the prices of wheat, the prices of cattle, without performing any necessary function in building houses or providing men and women with bread or meat. If he comes into possession of a flour mill, he will not

secure profits by producing flour; he has lost a true sense of what production is. But he will reorganize the company, capitalize it at five times its actual value, accept cash for his share of the newly written stock, and leave the rank and file of the shareholders to raise the price of flour enough—if they can—to guarantee dividends on their inflated investment. Since life is what one can get out of it, there is no limit to which he will not go in his efforts to care for his instincts.

So it matters little whether the repression of the creative spirit brings starvation or gluttony, this repression eventually manifests itself in conduct by engendering a feeling that is out of harmony with any existing order, not only because that order may be bad, but because no order can satisfy men when the basis of satisfaction is the number of things their instincts "require." When they have been toppled from that interesting but precarious way which they have felt definitely or vaguely opened somewhere to a valid destiny, there is no genuine satisfaction to be had. Children will demand "freedom" and will be unhappy when they have it, because it doesn't excite them enough. Workers will demand more and more pay for less and less work.

Employers will demand larger and larger profits on smaller and smaller investments. When the real business of life has been suppressed, when clear-sightedness, emotional honesty, the joy of devotion, and an exalted self-feeling over work well done have been superseded by a humiliating scramble to catch up with one's consciously labeled instincts, why should not one receive a hundred dollars an hour for dollar-an-hour labor, or five thousand per cent on an investment in foodstuffs, if one little instinct can thereby be momentarily satisfied? The effort is futile, of course; "but is not everything else?"

If, then, we have the creative spirit either curbed or smothered in any considerable number of men and women, we cannot hope to see about us much of the zest for life that in youth is constantly flowering out into dreams of high faith and altruism. Who can be expected to exhibit much good will for his neighbor across the street or across the Atlantic Ocean when he himself feels that he is in spiritual bondage? "More than half the pain of pain," Professor Hocking has said, "is the imprisonment of personality and the unequal struggle of the spirit to get free and

be itself." [1] And when this spiritual freedom is denied us by too much pressure from without, we are in no temper to concern ourselves with those ideals in which we all believe when we are at our best.

III

When we turn to the positive effects of the creative spirit on conduct, we have more than a mere obverse of this negative view. It is true that if the right encouragement of men to approach their world with a certain "wondering welcome" and to go their way with emotional expectation and hopefulness should do nothing more than to relieve a considerable number of their feeling of revolt and save a certain other smaller number from fatty degeneration, the effort required would be more fruitful than most human efforts have been. But such a blessing is only the fundamental preliminary of what the creative spirit brings; for it brings also a right basis for a positive, inspiriting morality.

How the word must fill one with uncertainty! For the pity is that in America to-day morality

[1] William Ernest Hocking: *The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Human Happiness*, p. 14.

has degenerated into a quibble over whether Jones is a puritan or Smith is a "liberal." That the zest for life and the sense of well-being which most of us think of as happiness might be increased by a right morality seems rarely to be considered. On the one hand are arrayed those who insult the human race of the present time by assuming that only men of the past were competent to deal with matters which promote or deter spiritual growth; on the other are those who assume—or pretend to assume—that the way a man lives has nothing to do with his life. Between the two, morality has come to be a subject that had better not be mentioned in polite society.

But if men should begin honestly to ask if morality should not be something which enables them to get the highest out of life, there would be no reason for hanging the head at mention of the word; and it would be relevant to ask just how the right basis for this morality would be provided by the creative spirit. This spirit, we should see, would provide us, in the first place, with the one surest means of animal composure. Many will say that animal composure is a very modest aspiration. But when we reflect upon the

countless millions who are not permitted to enjoy the sunlight; who suffer in man-made houses of torture during the winter, and then suffer in them only in another way in the heat of summer; who have insufficient wholesome food, and who know not how to make a cheerful meal of what they have; and whose domestic life is less amiable than that of caged hyenas—when we reflect upon all this, the merest sensory composure of a healthy, unworried animal must seem nothing less than a gift from heaven. Yet by a puzzling turn with which we are all familiar, these people are usually denied this animal composure because they are constantly thinking about it. How great an annoyance digestion may become when we turn to digestion as an end to be attained! How great a source of boredom the subconscious mind may be when, let us say, a woman makes hourly reflection on "my subconscious!" Now the loss of consciousness of self through which the creative worker passes in the process of working toward his remote but partly realizable ideal, is just the kind of experience best designed to swallow up any over-developed awareness of one's make-up. When one is engrossed in an enterprise that calls for creative activity, the onward-

moving current straightens itself out so surely toward the greater ideal, that animal composure comes—as it usually must come in beings that think—as a by-product.

In the second place, the creative spirit would contribute to an inspiriting morality by providing us with a standard for the measuring of established customs. To take an example that ought to be perfectly innocuous, suppose Jones wishes to decide whether he ought to walk in the garden on Wednesday morning. Now if Jones has a hard-and-fast rule that he never walks in the garden on Wednesday morning, the matter is simple enough. He and his friends may have long arguments about walking in the garden on Wednesday morning, and they may cease to be friends, as a result. But the problem for Jones remains a simple one: he need only to ascertain whether it is Wednesday morning. Or suppose Jones has some neighbors whom he does not like, and when they walk in the garden on Wednesday morning he petulantly declares that anything is better than doing what they do! His problem is still a simple one.

But suppose Jones is deeply concerned with a satisfying spiritual state which he sometimes en-

joys momentarily and always enjoys working toward. His problem of Wednesday morning immediately calls for more significant solution. He will have to determine, so far as he possibly can, whether walking in the garden or doing something else will really contribute more to his well-being. He will have to decide, even, whether his preference is a real one or whether he is deceiving himself into thinking so. He may be unready to determine the matter wholly on the basis of his own experience; he may think the hazard is too great, or he may feel that some one else has possessed a sensitiveness more reliable than his own. Certainly in trivial matters, and in some matters in which the race has rendered a clear verdict, acquiescence may for Jones be the wiser policy; he would be idiotic if he refused to utilize the past. Yet in most instances in which there may be honest doubt, it is better for Jones to test the case by asking how it relates itself to his highest experience. He may discover new light on the subject, and he is kept in a healthier state of mind. He retains some of the sensitiveness of the locomotive engineer who measures the progress of his engine not by watching the hands of the clock in his cab,

but by experiencing the right sure feeling of onward motion.

There is something morally significant in the horror a woman once experienced when she called on a man of letters and found him under the dining-room table with his children, and in the delight with which he later told how he crawled out. The creator, above every other human worker, feels the absurdity of decorum when it clashes with something more important. He is impatient of dead weight, of red tape, of any senseless customs which men adhere to simply because nobody has asked why. He feels, with justification, that if an alert, inquiring soul which draws to itself the most subtle experience of the past and present, and disciplines itself in the making of decisions on the basis of disinterested truth, cannot point the way to an inspiriting morality, then there is no human way.

IV

If we look more specifically, we shall be able to see how the creative spirit in conduct bears upon certain questions which occupy our thought at this hour. We shall see, to begin with, that

from this spirit there results a clear honesty of intent. When a man measures attainment in an enterprise by the acquisitions which result from it, the means may be subordinated to the end without any serious qualms of conscience. But there is simply no point to the creator's being dishonest in his processes, for the processes are a large part of his pleasure. He is pushing toward some kind of truth as he has conceived it, and he makes progress only as he experiences contributing truths along the way. He would not have any satisfaction in pretending to arrive after a deceitful journey. Surrendering reality to something that is less real is the most painful surrender of all to the uncalloused spirit. "There," said an architect known the world over, as he one day walked along the street in New York with a friend—"there is a building that made the architect sick. You can tell by looking at its false engineering and its make-believe architecture that the contractor, not the architect, had his way. . . . And over there is one where the architect's will prevailed. It may not have netted the contractor quite so much—unless the man who had it built paid the bill—but it satisfied the architect, whoever he was."

It is just this insistence on the satisfaction of one's own highest demand for truth that gives to the creative worker much of his importance in the world. He is not a sham himself, and he finds it difficult to tolerate anybody who is—except as a source of amusement. More, even, than those who consecrate themselves to truth by expounding it, he shows how futile is mere possession when secured at the expense of intellectual honesty. To be sure, in immediate physical need, a man may sacrifice this high integrity. But the futility of his existence afterward, and the persistence of those who hold out even in the face of the utmost privation, afford sufficient testimony to the creator's devotion to an honesty that is untrammeled.

There results, secondly, an elevation of spirit that is unharmful. Of late we have been hearing much about everyone's having at least an occasional fling at feeling that he is a person of consequence, that he presides over something or other. It is true; he must. But in accordance with a ready-made philosophy, it has been assumed that he cannot have this experience save in a struggle with his fellows. In other words, he must lord it over somebody else—who must, of course, in

consequence, be robbed of the similar experience which he craves. But all those who say that the instinct of an ugly pugnacity is ineradicable and must always express itself to the detriment or humiliation of others in order to be self-satisfying may here find an unassailable reply. The creative worker encounters all the hazard of a warlike enterprise; he is sustained by a great devotion; he has a fair chance to share the elation of victory, all of the sense of conquering, without the accompanying wreckage for anyone else. In truth, the more victorious he and his kindred spirits become, the freer does everyone else become from defeat; some little part of the quickening of their original work is always communicated to others. Here is Professor James's "moral equivalent of war" and very, very much more; for not only is man's instinct for campaigning satisfied, not only is it turned to mankind's positive account, but it is satisfied by such an exaltation and constant remaking of the man himself that the kind of campaigning he requires is constantly modified for the better.

There results, in the third place, a sound neighborliness. We have already seen that creative workers are likely to feel as if they were of one

company. It may be said, further, that their life provides the only basis for a neighborliness that will endure. It may be urged, of course, that neighborliness is encouraged by any sort of co-operation. But there are degrees. Fellow prisoners in a penitentiary have a certain feeling of union; members of a labor organization or of a manufacturing society find common ground upon which to meet; and college students band themselves together for one reason or another. The tie that binds may be nothing more than fellow-commiseration or a real or imagined need of defense. But in creative work it is that ultimate co-operation which springs from a recognition of sacred personal power, of aims not socially sinister, of a common yearning for infinite growth. Why should I be fearful of my neighbor when what he does is something which I, because of the very fact that I am I, cannot possibly do, and when that which I can do is something which he cannot possibly appropriate, and when nothing which either of us does expresses a false motive toward the other? The best basis for neighborliness is not sentimentalism about "our common humanity," or pity for the less fortunate—whom we have very possibly

helped to make suffer—but a positive feeling of respect and confidence, and a justified belief that what men do while they are at the business of the day will inevitably result in mutual benefits.

Happily, these direct ways in which the exercise of the creative spirit might touch everyday life advantageously are scarcely more important than the indirect ways. The one great magic of human life consists in man's ability to conceive an ideal above where he stands, to express his ideal in something material, and then, by living with this material expression, to be lifted up toward the ideal itself. Whether or not we believe in the inheritance of acquired characteristics, we know that within the span of an individual life, material environment may make the difference between a relatively unsatisfying life and one that is relatively satisfying. We must admit, moreover, that through a series of generations which overlap as our human generations do, there may be a great accumulated environment which for the individuals of a given generation amounts not only to inheritance, but to destiny. A man may wholly redirect the spiritual lives of his grandchildren by contributing significantly to

his own environment. Now it is when we bear in mind that the creators are the ones who constantly remake environment—the environment which is to rebound on the individuals in it—that we can see what the indirect influence of the creative spirit on conduct may be.

In the first place, to take an instance which to-day touches mankind with a seriousness approaching desperation, a right exercise of the creative spirit could give us a newly visualized social and political order. This does not mean, necessarily, that we should enter upon a campaign of casting aside everything old in favor of everything new. But it does mean that we must try to see a little better what we are about, and that we must examine anew, and forever examine anew, the agencies that are supposed to be helping us on our journey. In spite of all that may be said about the advantages of "muddling along"—toward what, only God knows—the people of the past whom we to-day hold in greatest reverence were the ones who projected their imagination and their thought beyond the trivialities of the hour toward something that had a new coherence and wholeness. The makers of the Constitution of the United States might

well be cited as an instance! Yet to-day, how few men try without prejudice to visualize the social or political scheme in which we live, or make any serious effort to visualize the actual working of another that might in any essential way be an improvement upon it! Nothing could afford a truer commentary on the haphazard, unimaginative character of current "constructive thinking" than the sporadic, imperfectly conceived, and often senseless proposals that are made in legislative assemblies for the supposed amelioration of man's earthly lot. Who can read the *Congressional Record* and believe that the authors of this demagogic melange belong to the same race of men as those who design cathedral towers, Brooklyn bridges, Simplon tunnels, ocean liners, and planes that fly in the air? And yet this *Record* is supposed to reflect the best that mankind is doing in devising a political society in which we may associate amiably together!

Now, according to all of the impartial laws of chance, if it were valid for most men to keep on growing after the age of six or eight or ten, some of them would turn honest, unpartisan efforts toward the improvement of our social scheme.

To-day, the odds are all against any such improvement. To begin with, the proposer himself is likely to be a prejudiced worker who is inspired from without rather than from within. And if he is not, the great body of his auditors, through their passive habits of mind, will not take him seriously; or if they do, the demagogue will rise up and call him a reactionary or a radical, and fill the air with empty mouthings about the sacredness of something or other that he himself has a financial or political interest in; and the disinterested thinker who has visualized a better day will be laughed to scorn and probably called upon officially to explain what business he has in trying to promote man's well-being. And yet nothing short of the creator's state of mind, widely encouraged, can give us hope. We must have his eagerness to explore, his integrity before his work, his relative freedom from sinister social motives. We have nothing better within ourselves upon which to rely.

In like manner, the creative spirit modifies the external world to our advantage by constantly overflowing into art. Although we have been reminded innumerable times, we are forever forgetting that the only way to have art is to have

a life from which it may spring and in which it may live without artificial respiration. When men are constantly recombining life into new expressions of their sense of form, they are concerned inevitably with the way a thing is done, quite as much as with the mere fact that it should be done at all; and the material with which they work is not something foreign to their lives, but the fabric of daily occupation. The kind of art that actually influences men's conduct is not that which is made by a few professionals and exhibited for expert evaluation, but that which is everywhere present in the form of better-looking gardens, better-looking roadsides, better-looking houses, better-looking chairs, better-looking clothes for our bodies. That ten men should exercise a real discrimination in the purchase of their cravats is more important to the well-being of America than that one man should make an indifferent oil painting for a price. And the devotion with which ten wives of coal miners save their nickels to purchase flower seeds with which to complete a rational color scheme in their front yards might well be ranked above a masterpiece.

A wide encouragement of the creative spirit

brings just such an art as this—one that during the heat of the day is persistently lifting us away from ourselves. In some such manner it actually becomes true that man cannot live by bread alone. From the vegetable gardener to the designer of skyscrapers, there are these flowerings-out, these departures from the crassly utilitarian, which we can only call spiritual. They modify and mellow man's spirit while he is engaged in making them, and they in turn modify his spirit happily when he beholds them after they are made.

V

Of course, no one would suggest that man's only need is an opportunity to create. He must reflect upon his work; he must have a stabilizing routine when he is weary of adventuring; he must sometimes be soothed by doing nothing in particular. Some men, moreover, require—or at least can be content with—a relatively small amount of creative activity and a relatively large amount of routine. But in our highly irritated efforts to possess, to consume, the exercise of the creative has held little of the place which it must

have in any invigorating conduct. And until we give it its place, until we recognize the importance of having everyone participate according to his own endowment in some modest part of the business of exploring and remaking our interesting world, we can scarcely hope to live together respectfully, amiably, or joyfully.

III: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

. . . not the niche, but
the open road.
—Randolph Bourne.

III: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

I

If men should ever come to appreciate how much of their peace and self-respect is dependent upon their freedom to engage in creative enterprise, to travel over new ways that enrich their daily experience, they would at once begin to inquire what attitude toward this spirit of pioneering is to be maintained by such a powerful organization as the church.

It should be said at the outset that the current tendency to heap special criticism upon every organization concerned with religion has no justification in fact. The church, one cannot help believing, has momentarily lost its way. But so have political institutions, so has industry, so have the non-religious reformers. The church has experienced no greater uncertainty than have other institutions. And throughout its uncertainty, it has maintained a benevolent activity quite beyond the comprehension of the breast-

beating sinners who stand afar off and bewail its impotence.

Nevertheless, the church stands in need of appraisal. Quite in keeping with the tendency of institutions generally, it has been so zealous in perpetuating its own life that it has drawn away from the ideal which gave it origin. True, church communicants have increased steadily; church property has mounted into hundreds of millions of dollars; new encyclopædias of religion, new dictionaries of the Bible, and new histories of the church have filled scores of shelves in university libraries. Yet the evils which the church professes to ameliorate—hatred and murders and dishonesties and infidelities—mount in the percentage columns to unheard-of figures, and men give their best brains daily to the contrivance of more and more ghastly weapons with which to destroy one another and lay waste the face of the earth. Historically the church has preserved the ideals of Jesus of Nazareth; but no one, not even the most ardent, most reverent supporter of the church, can say that it has been successful in establishing those ideals in present-day life.

It is not too much to say that the church has entered into competition with Christianity. The

church has drawn so far away from its origin, it has been so zealous in fortifying its own traditions, in providing itself with the trappings of temporal warfare, that it would not be a welcome place for Jesus were he to arrive unannounced. Few churches would permit him to occupy the pulpit. We must not lose sight of the kind of person he was: a man, first of all, about whose birth the gossips wagged their tongues; a man of whom many said, "Why, he isn't so much, this carpenter's son; we know about him"; a man who permitted women to waste precious ointment upon him; a man without official standing who had not even a place of residence; a man who in his indignation called certain of his contemporaries a generation of vipers; a young man—only thirty—who preached unorthodox economic doctrines to the populace. Is there anyone who believes that such a man would find much encouragement to preach his doctrines in the church to-day if he were to come to us divested of the prestige which has accumulated round him in the course of two thousand years?

And he would scarcely fare better in the institutions of learning nurtured by the church. Does anyone know of an accredited college where

this preacher of doctrines designed to convert the world into a kingdom of heaven could, without academic degrees, professional "standing," and other similar sanctions, secure a position as a teacher of morals? In some colleges he would be permitted to address such as might assemble on the campus to hear him; in many, he would not. College officials would look askance at this man who had "drifted in" from nowhere in particular and who came without proofs of his right to instruct the young. If he were not arbitrarily ruled out for being a disturbing element—which he always was to the static—it is not unlikely that the trustees of the college would find "with deep regret" that the conditions of the gift of the college chapel made it impossible for him to use it as a forum in which to discuss topics of the day. The students would hear him gladly; for his clear vision, his idealism, would be authentic to their unspoiled spirits. And occasionally, in unexpected places, he would receive a welcome officially. But men with families to support would scarcely care to take his chances of "fitting in" in denominational education.

Just how the drawing away of the church from the spiritual simplicity of its origin influences the

individual may be seen, I believe, in the life of most reflective persons who live where churches are numerous. When these instances are examined, they will probably not be wholly unlike my own. I grew up in the church, I am a member of one of the most enterprising denominations, and I attend some church with reasonable regularity. If it is permissible to make the avowal, I believe I may say, moreover, that I enjoy something akin to a religious experience. At any rate, I find an abiding satisfaction in reflecting upon the youthful simplicity, the sorrow, the beauty, the courage, and the power to be oneself which Christ revealed. On very rare occasions I am disposed to say something—not much, certainly—to other men about my reflections. Yet with the exception of a Catholic parish priest, a Methodist bishop, a canon in the Anglican church, and one or two ministers with whom I have become intimate in extra-official ways, I cannot think of myself as going to a clergyman to exchange confidences about the beauty and the mystery of life, or to receive a spiritual quickening that would send me away heartened to the rigors of new adventure. I tried it once when I was a student, and so un-

spiritual was the attitude of the clergyman, so full of the suggestion that he was rendering expert professional service, that I did not need to make any conscious resolve never to try again.

This feeling toward the ministry, and consequently toward the church, may not be universal; but it represents honestly the feeling of my church-going friends. We are sympathetic toward the traditions of the church because they have been held in reverence before us since our infancy; we know that despite everything said about the social coldness of the church, we find there a certain respectable good-fellowship; and we recognize the efficiency of the church as a means of distributing charity, sending to the uttermost parts of the earth the church's own traditions, and consummating campaigns for denominational education, for social decency, and —when men are sufficiently intoxicated with the desire to kill—for the promotion of warfare. But we do not think of the church as carrying to the hearts of individual men the assurance of Jesus that every life is immeasurably precious because in every life the kingdom of heaven—the glory of high fulfillment—may come if one only seeks with enough earnestness.

II

When we are able to see without bias how the church has become so great a thing in itself that it has neglected or subordinated this "salvation" of the individual which was preached unceasingly by its founder, we can know just how the church stands in relation to the creative spirit. For Christ's "personal salvation," his "kingdom of heaven," was a high spiritual experience to be enjoyed only when a man should risk all in new explorations. No one has preached more persistently the absolute need of the creative quest. In all his associations with fishermen and brokers and politicians and high-churchmen and lawyers and courtesans, and even with the spirit of evil itself on the mountain, he was never tempted away from this central doctrine that the abundance and the quality of life depend upon one's willingness to break away from the hollow shells of tradition and go on journeyings which nourish one. He wanted to set men free for such journeyings. He wanted them to see how they had obscured the kingdom of heaven with endless flummery. He begged them to observe how blessed were the inquiring little children whose

lives had not yet been blunted and made expedient by the devices of men. He wanted them to know that unless they became eager and adventurous in their own behalf, unless they were unafraid and ready to take a chance even as the birds of the air, they would certainly miss the very peace which they professed to cherish. If they hesitated, if they tried to save themselves, they were sure to be lost.

Such a doctrine, some one always rises up to proclaim, worked very well in the simple days of the Galilean, but it does not admit of application to-day "in our complex life" when economic and social practices are "so different." And if one counters with the observation that economic and social practices have not been changed so much as might be supposed—admittedly a reflection on the efficacy of the church—one is sure to be met with the lament that everybody seems to have become destructively critical without proposing anything constructive. Waiving the fact that this is the stock retort of lazy minds, and the further unassailable fact that sometimes the surest progress must be made by the destruction of debris, one may say that there are constructive proposals to make to the church if it

will only give ear. These may be summed up in a question: How do men act as a result of their connection with the church? In its professed aim, the church is the most potential organization in the world for giving impetus to the material and spiritual pioneering which is a part of the creative life. In isolated cases, where religious fervor is genuine, the church does to-day send men into the joy and the rigors of adventure with irresistible curiosity. But how could it become such a power that the pursuit of the ideal, the spirit of exploration, would become a normal part of the lives of more men—all men who turned to the church earnestly?

III

The first of these proposals is very simple, but very dangerous to the calm of the existing church. It is this: The church should begin to preach everywhere the doctrine that men will find whatever is sufficient to their needs only when they seek; and that nothing they find in their quest for truth will ever do any essential harm to a church that is honestly established on the life of Jesus. His words have been mouthed over

so thoughtlessly that they have lost most of their rich overtones of truth. But when we pause to look at them receptively, his inescapable belief in fearless, constant inquiry becomes very pertinent to the life of the church at this hour.

For the church, perfunctorily professing a religion of faith, has become the most doubting, the most skeptical of all organizations. It must be secure; everything must be made safe. It wishes to know just what the result of any given exploring is going to be. And anything which threatens to encroach upon what it has regarded as its unique domain, or that newly interprets knowledge which has for ages been again and again newly interpreted, is likely to be attacked as some new kind of menace. The persistence of evil or the laggard character of truth seems not to trouble the church half so much as some threat to its influence as a temporal organization.

Even the attitude which the church takes toward its position in a given community reveals its fear. It is jumpy about its standing. It must prove locally that it is an accredited concern. Does not the Honorable So-and-so belong? And did not the church records prove

that General So-and-so was baptized in the church as a child—although he never attended as an adult? There may be doubt about his membership, but his star will go on the service flag, since it looks well, and he would not be ungracious enough to ask anybody to take it off. And did not Mr. So-and-so, who plays golf with the pastor, consent to have his name put on the church records provided there would be no required public confession of faith?

But the church reveals its greatest fear when new progress in knowledge is reported, or when new experimentation is proposed. It proclaims itself to be the champion of truth; yet when revolutionary research is being made, it seems always to fear that its position is about to be proved false. If anybody dares to suggest that either the life or the preaching of Jesus might bear witness to the healing of the body by the healing of the mind, or justify the penetration of science into the character of biological life, he is in danger of being officially condemned as an unbeliever; and in the uproar, men cease to be men and become either "fundamentalists" or "renegades." It seems impossible for the church to remember that the truth, which it professes to

nurture, is being revealed in all sorts of unofficial places—even in semi-respectable places such as Nazareth, for instance—through those who have been moved by some strange and high spirit to inquire.

The ministers who strive to keep men's minds pleasantly closed are not restricted to the remote provinces. For many months I have attended frequently the Sunday-evening service in a well-known church in a large city. The minister is famous; he possesses the personal magic of the real orator; he can do what he will with most of the two or three thousand people who hear him. Yet every time I have attended his church he has abused his high privilege by getting a firmer and firmer anti-liberating grip on his listeners. Always he has made some appeal to the denominational prejudice of his parishioners, or has launched some attack against the group in his own denomination with whom he disagrees on "fundamentalism," or has made facetious remarks about the futility of intellectual inquiry. He has never failed to close men's minds against other doctrines—or against his own. The salvation which such men preach is not salvation

through seeking and finding, but salvation through believing there is nothing new to find.

Here, then, is one definite step that the church should take: it could avail itself of its unique opportunity to proclaim the salvation through inquiry and growth which its founder proclaimed. It has been negligent through many centuries, but its opportunity to give high impetus to life is still incomparably greater than that of any other institution.

The greatness of this opportunity seems rarely to be considered. It is the lot of almost every thoughtful man and woman to be agitated and perplexed at times about what Schopenhauer called the problem of existence. We can scarcely gather a hundred people together at random anywhere at any time without having in the group at least one or two for whom this problem is acute and disheartening. "Men are like that." They want to see how they may be kept from disillusion. If the church were to lift up its voice and tell them that the way is not through finding new illusions, but through a new discovery of the chief reality within themselves—the capacity to go on endlessly exploring, and endlessly find-

ing new spiritual satisfactions—they would be drawn irresistibly by the life-giving power.

In the solitude of the fields, in the dark, man-made caverns of the earth, in the monotony of the shop, in the dinginess of tenement houses, in the tawdry glamour of furnished-to-order homes, men suffer and wait for a spiritual freedom toward which they have not found for themselves a right approach. When the church tells them—and tells them truthfully—that it is unafraid to help them individually to find their own approach, it will possess some of that miraculous influence which a broken and contrite genius, whiling away his days in prison, found in the life of him who gave the church its name: "I see no difficulty at all in believing that such was the charm of his personality that his mere presence could bring peace to souls in anguish, and that those who touched his garments or his hands forgot their pain; or that as he passed by on the highway of life, people who had seen nothing of life's mystery saw it clearly, and others who had been deaf to every voice but that of pleasure heard for the first time the voice of love and found it as 'musical as Apollo's lute'; or that evil passions fled at his approach, and men whose

dull unimaginative lives had been but a mode of death rose as it were from the grave when he called them." [1]

The second proposal to the church is that it get into a natural position to promote social justice; for such a position not only inspires righteousness among men, but assures them that their impulses toward honest pioneering will have a fair chance of fruitage. To-day the church is not in that position. It has allowed itself to be thought of as subordinate to other interests, to be colored by something not of its own nature; it has been induced to undertake the task of an interested arbiter in an economic war which is being fought out upon artificial issues. The church, therefore, must be tactful. But often the tactfulness is no more than an uncourageous kind of protective coloration. In truth, one may visit the churches in any good-sized city and find that they are not preaching any identical doctrine at all. They are preaching, each according to its economic rating, a vague social expediency, which seems perfectly harmless when more or less ob-

[1] Oscar Wilde: *De Profundis.*

scured by the buzzing activities of the various societies within the church and the excitement over Sunday-school basket-ball contests. Sometimes I have performed the experiment of going from church to church in a strange city at the hours of the morning service and trying to prognosticate the quality of the expediency to be preached within by the wheel base of the automobiles at the church entrance. If the pastors have discussed social justice at all, the case has usually stood: very long automobiles—voluptuous optimism and the reading of much inspirational poetry (not too definite in its application); medium-sized automobiles—a judicial outlook which accepts the existence of problems in the world, but which reveals a sure faith that all of them can be solved handily if each side concedes a little "in that spirit of compromise which is the basis of progress"; modest automobiles, or no automobiles at all—a full exposition of evils that beset us, and an adequate denunciation of the god of gold!

More frequently, however, the entire question of social justice is shrewdly passed over. Such an attitude seems especially ignoble when one reflects upon the vigor which the church has en-

joyed whenever it has dared to defy those who would control it or wreck it for base reasons. And if we allow ourselves to go back to the source of Christianity, how inescapable is the command to enter into the life of the hour! What a jest do those church members utter who demand that their ministers refrain from dealing with economic subjects and devote themselves to "the preaching of the gospel of Jesus"! What a subject for the ironic pen of Anatole France! When coal that is mined at the risk of life in Ohio for 87 cents a ton is sold in Minnesota for $19 a ton, a price which caused acute and prolonged suffering to persons in the helplessness of old age, is there anyone who believes that this young Galilean, who chased his fellow countrymen from the temple because they made it a den of thieves, would not participate in the economic discussion of the hour? Or when the fruit of the earth has been brought forth in such abundance that everyone might possess some of it, is it conceivable that this young Galilean would remain silent and "well bred" when he saw it rotting in hundreds of orchards because dealers could make as much money by handling smaller quantities on a wide margin, as they could by

handling all of it with the margin narrowed? Or when men try to win a strike by putting emery-stone on the axles of locomotives which haul people to their daily work; or when they refuse to let a man work at a price which to him seems fair, and cause his children to suffer from under-nourishment, is there anyone who can imagine that this serene but sharp-tongued carpenter's son would sit idly observing?

Yet the church is not in a position to consider such problems strictly on the basis of justice. Instead—and on this point I speak with specific knowledge—we have ministers quietly "passed on" because they do not preach the particular grade of social expediency which the most influential of the congregation wish to hear; we have the spectacle of daily newspapers in a large city announcing that a certain bishop in a well-known denomination would not be invited to speak in the churches of that city because it was feared he might touch upon economic problems then in the municipal mind; and we have a great interchurch movement thrown into paroxysms—and seemingly into the discard—because its representatives dared to inquire into the social justice or injustice of an industrial strike.

From such pusillanimity there is an escape, but the church has not yet accepted the conditions necessary to prevent that escape from being turned into a rout. The too frequent attitude is that we may discuss economic questions in a detached, vaguely expedient manner, but "we don't want to stir anything up." There must be little penetration of specific instances, and in all things there must be a nice balance. If the president of the local miners' union is invited to speak on "The Church and the Laboring Man," there must be no long delay before the president of the chamber of commerce is invited to speak on "The Church and Business." The church accepts as inevitable a clear division between groups of men, when the business of the church, according to its own profession of faith, is to make all such artificial lines of warfare disappear.

Here again it would be profitable for the church to turn to the life of its founder. For he not only showed how essential it is that his followers participate in the life of the times, but revealed clearly the basis on which the participation should be made. He was not trying to establish or disestablish a social order; he was

not a constructive critic—the modern kind who comes forth with an outline of every subordinate office to be filled, and a blue-print of every building to be occupied. It is true that capitalists and socialists and communists and anarchists have tried, all of them, to prove that Jesus belonged to them; that such and such a verse in the gospels undoubtedly shows how he had them favorably in mind. There is nothing surprising in this attitude, since the custom of breaking up the life of Jesus into its constituent aphorisms will enable one to find almost any justification which one seeks. But that is not a fair way of viewing the record; it is not a fair way of viewing any record. The total effect of a man's precept and practice, not isolated instances removed from their setting, must be the basis on which a man's intent is judged. And when we look at the life of Jesus in any such reasonable way, we must see that he was not championing any order. He was a prophet; and like every other prophet, he was concerned with ultimate good toward which men might look.

It ought not, therefore, to be difficult to see how this herald of the kingdom of heaven within

us would probably enter economic life, and how his entry would affect the creative spirit in men. He would apply one test chiefly: Does this economic life help a man—not some vague sociological entity—to experience the growth, the flowering out, the satisfaction of contributing in interesting ways to the destiny of mankind, which every man in some degree craves? And if the church were to cease trying to act as a go-between for the contending parties and were to demand the consideration of this higher question—the question of every man's right to a wholesome atmosphere of growth—it would not only break up the solidarity of the opposing ranks without attacking either contestant as such, but by holding aloft the brightness of a justice much more important than the contention of either party to the controversy, it would quicken men with the assurance and the passionate spirit of exploration which they possess when the vision they follow is high.

To these proposals that the church proclaim a creative gospel and that it lift itself to a natural position of power in the affairs of the day—proposals calling for a vigorous evangelical activity

—a third must be added. The church should make a persistent and whole-hearted effort to exalt beauty.

In one respect this third proposal overlaps the second, for this question of beauty is also a question of economic life. If the aggressive trade spirit of the hour is not to convert our entire existence into an endless thoroughfare of gasoline filling-stations and glaring advertisements of the stations not yet above the horizon—or some other equally hideous panorama—the question of the beautiful will have to become a part of every discussion of commerce, agriculture, education, religion, and public domain. In so many ways is it cheaper, at least for the time being, to make the world ugly rather than sightly, that all of the forces of decency will be required even to maintain the ground we possess.

But the essential reason why the church should nurture beauty lies deeper than any acute problem of trade. It is unnecessary to raise the age-old question of how much of religion is beauty and how much of beauty is religion; yet we must remember that in some manner our conceptions of beauty and of Christian exaltation are so interwoven that we are in danger of losing an impor-

tant part of the one if we lose the other. Now the church has sometimes talked so rhetorically about "the beauty of holiness" that it has drowned out the modest voice that would speak for "the holiness of beauty." In its efforts to keep everybody lined up for the church, it has employed the cheapest devices of current life, and has allowed such an institution as the moving-picture theater, for example, to steal much of the vital part of the church. If the Orpheum around the corner has vaulted ceilings and soft lights, a great organ, and a length which contributes easily to concentrated attention, that fact, for the public, is just one more reason for going to the Orpheum on Sunday evening.

As for the specific ways in which the church might contribute to an exaltation of beauty, they are obvious. It could, for instance, contribute beyond all estimation, by calling upon the creative workers in the field of the fine arts to make the church itself more beautiful. Those who are fortunate enough to live in the larger centers where there are always at least a few churches of positive beauty are in danger of forgetting how positively ugly are the churches in which most Americans worship. In this "average"

church, especially if it be of one of the evangelical Protestant denominations, how can an intelligent man, sensitive to form and color and sound, approach a Sunday-morning service reverently and receptively? The building is perhaps a monstrosity of architecture, built of the particular kind of bricks—if not cement blocks—which the local dealer happens to handle. Its interior is in the form of a section of a football stadium, with the pulpit in one corner or, worse still, flat against the center of the side wall. The choir is behind the minister, or a little to one side of him, so that no matter where a parishioner sits he not only looks into the distracting faces of some of his fellow "worshipers" on the other side of the stadium, but is forced to see the facial expression of the members of the choir as they "react," when he should be directing his undivided attention to the pulpit. Add to these sources of distraction the unheavenly shapes of the pulpit and the golden-oak pews, the brisk manner in which the men of the congregation pass the collection plates and uncover the strictly sanitary individual communion sets—add these to all the other distractions, and there is little left to induce in men the calm concentration and

spiritual receptivity of Jesus as he walked in the fields, or reflected upon the lilies, or cut through the mazes of economic distress with one sublime thought.

Yet all that is lacking is within the power of the creators whose genius the church could enlist if it would. They could produce the dignified, beautiful exterior; they could harmonize the interior so that it might induce a spirit of prayer; they could co-ordinate the parts of the service so that it would help one to breathe for an hour the breath of a life that is disinterested and hopeful and courageous.

The influence of a beautiful church, it scarcely need be pointed out, would extend to those who gave it its beauty. They would, in the first place, be provided with something recognized to do. That in itself would be a great boon. But more to be desired still, it would bring the creators in contact with religion at the very time they are exercising their artistic predilections. If there is one quality which art now needs—and always needs—it is a strong dash of grave hopefulness to save it from being wholly whimsical, wholly distraught, or wholly degraded. When we are in that most heavenly of restless states in

which we crave diverting humor, diverting tragedy, or diverting irony, we like to feel that the man who chuckled over the humor as he wrote it, or shuddered as he planned the tragedy, or twisted his mouth in supercilious mirth as he conceived the irony, sometimes looked upon the world with serene gravity or thought of his fellow mortals with a kindliness from which the last trace of the ironic had been distilled. The humanizing of art to such an end lies in no small part within the power of the church. It would justify itself for all time if it did nothing more than bring the artist and the church into a common field of labor in which both might feel at home.

But the church will probably be able always to contribute most to the encouragement of the artistic creators by fulfilling in a very high degree its function of looking at the world as the idealist sees it. A kinship not sufficiently dwelt upon always exists between the social idealist and the artist. In truth, the idealist is only an artist working with a different medium. He sees the world as it is, yet clairvoyantly, just as the artist does; and like the artist, he possesses the power to select, to subordinate, to relate in new ways,

until at last he projects for us a world that is different from the one we know, yet essentially of it. If, then, the church is constantly quickening men through its own idealism, some of them, by all the impartial laws of chance, will be drawn toward the ideal of beauty. Nor will the church try to lead these men with a halter or force them to prophesy in their art according to the church's own wish, but will content itself with being their spiritual origin and support, and with enabling them to see—and all others who are discerning—that the most exalted idealism is always very, very near to the most exalted beauty.

IV

It is possible, of course, to object that the church cannot live if it depend on such a program of giving high impetus to individual men and women; that in these days nothing short of mass action can be efficacious. But to this objection it is possible to make answer by offering a complete denial. It is possible to go further and say that there is no other way open to the church if it really wishes to promote the high

kind of spiritual life to which it is dedicated. Nothing in wholesale salvation or crowd psychology is vital enough or permanent enough to make the world a fit place to live in. Man spends most of his life—and the most influential part of it—in relative solitude, where the question of mass action is not relevant. Occasionally, to be sure, in some hour of public disturbance the church may show its organized power to good effect—provided, of course, it does not lose its potency between disturbances. But if it wishes to make its power unlimited and unending, it must bring its creative justification to each man in the solitude of his own soul. In doing that, in being content to serve as a humble instrument in enriching men's wisdom, clarifying their highest conscience, and deepening their attachment to the beautiful, it may lose a little of its position as an organized influence; but by losing a little of its body it would come into a fuller possession of its essential spirit.

IV: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND EDUCATION

To deafen with little bells the spirit that would think.

—Victor Hugo.

IV: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND EDUCATION

I

It was once believed that the chief concern of education was to bring face to face an earnest teacher who loved youth and an earnest youth who dreamed that he might some time love learning. Even so recently as in the nineteenth century, we in America were told that a university could consist of a great teacher sitting on one end of a log and a student sitting on the other. But in our zealous worship of the transmuting power of education, we have somehow lost ourselves in the worship of educational institutions. The log has become more important than either the teacher or the youthful seeker.

In the process, what has become of the pioneering, creative spirit which especially animates youth, and which affords the world occasional glimpses of something akin to progress? Suppose a man who cherishes this spirit, and who wishes to see it encouraged through the friendly,

personal association of professors and students in institutions of learning everywhere, and who expects as long as life lasts to devote himself to this spirit and to these institutions—suppose such a person, himself a worker in the world of education, looks sympathetically but unflinchingly about, just what must he observe? Just how do these institutions affect the teacher who would find for the joy of giving, and the undergraduate who would find for the sheer joy of finding and making something new?

II

No matter how great anyone's affection for colleges and universities may be, he is certain to be disheartened by the little effort which most of them make to secure the quickening teacher for their classrooms. To be sure, if such a teacher happens along and is willing to accept the salary that a mediocre man of his own age would accept, he will be preferred. But rarely is there anyone whose chief interest is to discover him and to encourage him to do his best and not his worst. The trustees are occupied with general oversight; the president, in turn, is busy with

campaigns and appropriations; and the faculty, with occasional exceptions, possesses no final authority in the making of new appointments.

And those who do possess authority seem not to be, first of all, concerned with setting youth aglow in the quest of truth or the pursuit of justice, but with maintaining a smoothly running machine. For fifteen years I have received inquiries from college presidents about young men whom they were considering for academic posts. Yet I have not thus far been asked to state whether any man might develop into a teacher of flaming power. Of course, they want "good" teachers. But certain questions which they submit, pertinent enough when not over-emphasized, reveal their essential concern: "Do you think he would fit into such an institution as you know this to be?" "Does he possess any marked peculiarities likely to arouse antagonism?" Occasionally there are other questions: "Does he smoke?" Or, "If a prospective donor of $200,000 to the funds of the college were at my house, is this young man a person I should care to bring around and introduce to him as a member of my faculty?" Let college men and women think over the great teachers they have

sat under, and say how many of them could meet such requirements if they were obliged to apply for a position unheralded!

But what happens to the believing young teacher who does get in? For despite the allurements of business, and all of the discouragements of teaching, many a young scholar of great potency refuses to turn aside. He saw something of a modern educational plant when he was a student; but he is now able to view it, to experience it, as one of the working force. Perhaps he has dared to dream that he might help to change it for the better; perhaps he has hoped only for a clear road in his own special field. But whatever his ideal, he soon discovers the obstacle in the way of its realization: he cannot easily find anybody who seems to possess ultimate authority—especially if he asks for anything. There seems to be no way of penetrating the intricacies of the organization. The administration building hums with typewriters and duplicating machines, often arranged in impressive rows to attain the efficiency of a mail-order department store. The list of administrative officers is long. In one college catalogue I found a list almost half as long as the list of

teachers. Committees of all sorts are numerous—so numerous that everybody seems to be devoting his chief time to them. And the faculty itself, though usually not large enough, is large. Sometimes it is so large that the president is constantly meeting members away from home without recognizing them; so large that heads of departments apologize for their superficial knowledge of the teachers who work under them; so large that men who have been in the service of the institution for years are humiliated—or enraged—by having ushers in the college chapel or in the football stands attempt to exclude them as strangers; so large that some of the men who have sat together in the same faculty room for two or three years do not know one another by name.

This complicated machine, the young teacher finds, runs irresistibly. In some of the progressive institutions the hours of teaching are from eight in the morning until as late as nine-thirty in the evening. On one day a professor eats his lunch at twelve o'clock because he has a class at one, and the next day he eats at two-fifteen because he has a class at one and another at twelve. In some institutions where much is

said about service, the authorities insist that a professor ought to be where he can be "got at" at all times in the day. I have known teachers of science who have struggled year after year to do a little investigation that would have been of untold value to their students, always to be thwarted because everyone had free access to their offices and laboratories at all times. Yet with all of this freedom of access to members of the faculty, the students are so numerous that they are often wholly unable to have conferences with the men who are supposed to be directing their work. "But my dear man," a distinguished teacher replied to a student who had caught him on the campus and had asked for a conference, "I haven't time for a conference with you for three weeks to come!" and he spoke the truth literally and in spirit; for he is a man who gives himself whole-heartedly.

The young teacher is usually called upon to participate in a highly complicated system of instruction. A professor lectures to three hundred, five hundred, seven hundred, or even a thousand students; groups of assistants, dignified by such names as "cubs," "theme demons," "dishwashers," and "section hands," of which the

young teacher is certain to be one for a time, try to ascertain in various ways whether the students have listened to the professor's lecture and have otherwise done the work prescribed in the course; and the college dean, or the registrar, or the chairman of the committee on scholarship, aided by a corps of stenographers, tries to keep the students in attendance upon the lectures and in communication with the "section hands."

Occasionally the young assistants are obliged to do the teaching as well as the holding of conferences and the grading of papers and examination books. Although they are not always required to do an excessive amount of work, they are not likely to have time hanging heavily; and sometimes the pressure is unbearable. I have recently known one young instructor in a metropolitan university who had four hundred and eighty students in his care—that is, six sections of eighty students each. In other words, he not only graded the papers and examination books of enough students to constitute two of the fair-sized colleges at Oxford University, but repeated every one of his recitations six times each week!

But whether the young teacher is excessively

burdened with students or not, the educational machine requires him to make a contribution that is not personal, but standardized. He may have aspirations of the most valid sort—aspirations that, if realized, would add much to the glory of the institution of which he is a member. But all those invested with enough power to encourage him are too busy to hear what his personal dreams are. He goes hopefully to the office of the president, and before he can overcome his reticence at speaking about anything so personal, so sacred, the ten minutes allotted to him are gone and he goes away in a numb stupor of disappointment. "Before I knew it," explained a young scholar of international repute, after he had for the first time presented letters to an American university president, "actually before I knew it, I found that I was once more outside his office." The constant glancing at the clock, the nervous casting of an eye to the next appointment marked on the calendar by the secretary, the over-eagerness for an opportunity to declare a proposal impracticable —these things do not send a young teacher away with a heart bounding in joy.

Even in those subjects which, because of their

definite and immediate appeal to the public, have been regarded as specially favored fields for pioneering, the factory spirit has wrought destruction. A man who engages many young instructors in one laboratory science observed to a friend that he had been able to trace the curve of their spiritual life and death almost as definitely as if they were workers for the United States Steel Corporation. The first year, he said, they tried to do their enormous routine task and save a little time at night or on Sundays for research; the second year they began to show eye-strain and a general appearance of being fagged; the third year, they decided that since they could not teach and do research at the same time, they would teach for a living, spend their Sundays in sleeping—or fishing—and take a year off occasionally for research; and the fourth year they decided either that they would abandon the profession in favor of business, or that they would abandon research for the time being, and hold on—and cultivate the president—in the hope that some providential good fortune or accident might remove an older member of the department! Can anyone believe that such an institution is the kind which William James mused

about when he said that a university was a place where the lonely scholar could feel at home?

Now it matters little how zealous or determined a young instructor may be; the constant insistence that the organization is more important than the individual teacher it is supposed to nurture, and the teacher's enforced habitual balancing on the rope instead of ever going unhesitantly across, sooner or later develop a lingering malady that might be called the academic mind. The academic mind is exceedingly cautious; it thinks this the wrong time to bring any matter to final settlement; it is fussy over nonessentials; it is caustic about common sense; it finds that the question up for consideration ought really to have been settled last year; the details should have been worked out by some one who cannot now be present; all in all, it seems better that no action should be taken at this time.

As a result of this malady, college faculties are always open to satire. Suppose a faculty were called upon to deal with the fact that the fraternities and sororities of the institution had given two hundred and fifty formal dances in one semester—a fact reported from one coedu-

cational university. As soon as the case is stated, somebody demands that "something be done about it;" two hundred and fifty are too many! Somebody else thinks that, after all, especially after the increased enrollment is considered, there are probably not many more dances than formerly. A hot debate ensues on the desirability and the means of controlling the situation. A member of long experience asks just when these numerous dances were held; and since no one could possibly tell him offhand, he moves that a committee be appointed with power to act. A fortnight later the committee reports that a forgotten regulation seems to cover the case, but desires further instructions from the faculty. A fraternity adherent not present at the last meeting expresses "the firm conviction" that there are other greater evils in college life than the innocent relaxation of the dance. A colleague who concurs begs to present a resolution which provides for "the going into the whole question of scholarship among students," and moves that the original committee be enlarged for this more comprehensive purpose. To an objection to the wording of the resolution, he retorts that his chief concern is not with questions of the subjunctive

mode. " 'Mood,' not 'mode,' " whispers some one with intent to be heard, and there is general laughter. The president announces that he will name the enlarged committee at a later time. One of two men who have sat quietly through the discussion remarks grouchily to his neighbor that "everyone who has spoken has subtracted from the sum of human intelligence." But there is general satisfaction that the matter has been disposed of, and the members of the faculty turn their attention to other business. In the meantime, the fraternities and sororities, having no restrictive word from any official, far-off source, decide upon a schedule of two hundred and eighty dances for the next semester instead of two hundred and fifty!

It becomes habitual to reduce everything to the intellectual or spiritual dead center where much remains to be said on both sides of the question. No unseemly enthusiasm must show itself. Professors themselves may have had some at one time, but it has been squeezed out of most of them, and they regard it skeptically when it appears in a younger colleague. In their minds it is associated with flightiness. One should feel satisfaction—mild satisfaction—only when the

pros and cons of a live idea have been reduced to statistics and rolled out of sight in an all-steel filing cabinet.

Now the ultimate evil in all such procedure is a breaking of the continuity of the best and most sensitive human traditions. Nothing flows on. Life is something that has become static, instead of something that is to remake itself endlessly in new ways.

Even where chronology would argue for a constant extension of tradition on into the future, the academic mind is in danger of treating the past as complete in itself. By some years, my short life reaches back beyond the date of the death of Tennyson. Whitman died the same year, although few knew it then. When the news of Tennyson's death made its way over the world, men of academic prestige wondered if anyone deserving the name of writer were now left. Yet at that hour there lived Meredith, and Hardy, and Barrie, and the gentle R. L. S., and Tolstoy, and Ibsen, and Pierre Loti, and Anatole France, and many another who holds some claim on the admiration or affection of the world; and Mr. Conrad and a score of others were only taking up their pens. Yet the lament that

all is over in letters has increased. From time to time I have heard college professors declare at the hour of some writer's death, that the last of the great had now gone. Sometimes they spoke with a sign of pleasure, as though they would not again be called upon to risk judgment on anybody who might refuse to remain classified. The records should be closed. And anyone who professed a desire to reopen them, to keep them forever open as they must be kept if the creative in man is to have a fair chance at normal growth, should be looked upon with pity.

I do not plead for any study of contemporary life at the sacrifice of acquaintance with the past. On the contrary, the past deserves a new, important attention. But from the past something significant might spring to-day or to-morrow! Yet to the young teacher who still possesses a little of the feeling that all may not be over, colleges and universities seem to make mere consideration of the most inglorious part of the past a more blessed thing than trying with any ardent hope to convert the past into a less inglorious future. As a result, either he yields and becomes engrossed with the things that have been —becomes a kind of intellectual custodian or

curator—or he breaks completely with such a deadly cult, and in defense turns to another—equally deadly—which professes contempt for all of the past, and a faith in man's power to do without it—to rise when he has nothing to rise from. When all of the circumstances are considered, it need not be surprising if our higher institutions of learning are not joyful with young teachers of contagious spirit who are engaged in all sorts of significant pioneering.

III

It cannot be said, then, that the highly organized institution of learning contributes much to the creative power of teachers. But what does it contribute to the student—while the administrative officers and the teachers are nervously trying to keep the machine in operation?

It is neither flippant nor inaccurate to say that the student dwells in another world. The closed traditions that benumb the young teacher result in an entire cleavage between faculty and students. Youth is over-eager to be active, to experience a sense of movement; and when it finds no way of catching step easily with the

official college, it creates an active world for itself. The faculty is looked upon as something complete, something apart, and sometimes as something positively inimical to the aspirations of youth. There follows no easy interpenetration of faculty and students. Thus it comes about that the impersonal functioning of the official college tends to enforce upon students the very crowd-mindedness which education is supposed to cure, and which must always be regarded as the arch enemy of any high kind of personal exploring.

Frequently, too, the student's consciousness of being something apart is accentuated by the mere bigness of the institution. Everything is done in droves. The magnitude of everything imposes the drove habit. Two hundred students, or five hundred, or seven hundred, sit in a given class and try to take the same notes—that is, if they do not loaf in class and then buy mimeographed notes from a guaranteed note-taker. All of the assistants in the course are instructed by a super-instructor in methods of making certain identical exactions. And then the hundreds of students, and quite possibly the score of inexperienced assistants to the professor in charge,

all "bone" for the same printed examination. Even where a system of faculty advisers has been established to overcome some of the evils of the wholesale, impersonal method, the system has frequently overshadowed the advisers, so that the students still think of the faculty as an official superior to be bartered with on the best terms possible. The intelligence test, often undeniably valuable, has found favor in many places for the simple reason that otherwise no one becomes intimately enough acquainted with a boy to say whether he is a genius or a moron.

Now this break in tradition between the faculty and the students would be bad enough if it only enforced upon the students a crowd-minded way of dealing with the official college. But it does not end there. It enforces a crowd-minded way of avoiding an education. There can be nothing very exciting about what goes on in a lecture room or in a meeting with an overworked young assistant. Many students, therefore—enough to give color to the entire college—reduce the working hours to the minimum, and try to find the necessary excitement in other ways. In their own world, which most college professors rarely enter with an understanding

sympathy, it is always possible to find plenty of men—droves of them—who will proclaim a common quest. And like the boy who begins to imagine himself hungry when he cannot participate in the recognized activity of his elders, these students find much of their excitement in the futile business of trying to satisfy their own flaming instincts. Why should they not? No one has made real to them the joy of a quest that is manlike. "The thing to do is to make the four years as cheerful as possible, avoid too much hard labor, get a sheepskin, and begin the great bluff."

The tone of this life, the very student who yields to it most completely will tell you, is overpitched, falsetto, as the crowd-minded life is almost certain to be. As one student expressed it, it is singing a "whisky tenor" when you are denied being a Caruso. If it becomes the thing to do, through some vague report from an institution of higher social rating, the vast majority of undergraduates will not only change their daily habits, but will strive to modify their entire way of looking at things. If it "is done," the men will adopt a new style of swagger, or discard an old one, or make all sorts of subtle

modifications of the nonchalance with which they speak about women; and, for the same sufficient reason, the girls will bob their hair, or pluck their eyebrows, or wear stockings of a new accepted shortness, or paint their lips, or talk in a husky, midinette voice, or take up smoking, or laugh superciliously at everything "in the new way." And for the non-conformer, no world is more pitiless. I have known young men and women to leave college broken-hearted because through the accident of dress or other social requirement they felt that their world—the least unreal world they found at college—did not look upon them beneficently. And many conscientious, studiously inclined athletes have confessed to me that they should never have taken the extra time required to be on the varsity football squad had it not been for fear of being proclaimed "turkeys" by students who clamored for a winning team.

Can such an atmosphere—developed chiefly, it must not be forgotten, by the attitude of the official college—be expected to induce honest personal initiative of any important kind? But even if some especially brave souls with vision of their own should successfully stem the tide

of student opinion, or please its fancy, they would still be heckled by officious gossips, or persons in high governmental position who undiscriminatingly find in genuineness and youthful fervor only another expression of the "wildness" or the "bolshevism" or the "radicalism" of the younger generation.

Few stop to reflect how keenly youth feels such unfairness as the following: In 1921, President Coolidge, then Vice-President, wrote a series of articles for one of the widely read magazines [1] on "Enemies of the Republic." Because of his high position, these articles have for three years been much referred to as authoritative. Now in his discussion of the "radical" tendencies of some of the colleges for women, he cited as proof the fact that on a certain evening a debating team representing Radcliffe College had supported the affirmative side of the question: "Resolved, That the recognition of labor unions by employers is essential to effective collective bargaining." But he failed utterly to mention the other fact that on the same evening, at the same hour, Radcliffe was represented in another debate by a team which supported the

[1] *The Delineator.* See the issue of June, 1921.

negative side of the same question. And that fact was reported on the front page of the college newspaper, along with the report of the other debate!

When students have the drove habit forced upon them by the official college, when they are made to adopt the tone of their own artificial world, and when any chance eagerness that may remain is constantly discouraged and often misrepresented by their unofficial elders, who can be surprised if they decide, like a lusty child in the care of a short-memoried maiden aunt, that indulging in adventurous deviltry is quite as profitable, and as likely to be approved, as anything else?

IV

If we are to have any amelioration of the state which now discourages pioneering, we must begin by establishing within our educational world a spiritual League of Youth and Age. The instinct to make old things new in interesting ways has been discredited, if not disastrously thwarted, by our attempts to carry on a double world instead of a single one.

In order to establish, or re-establish, the more unified spiritual state, two things are necessary. The first is a clearer and more widely disseminated interpretation of youth. There must be more fathers and mothers and teachers who can see how the seemingly slight difference between one kind of student life and another may enter into the life of the nation and there represent the difference between national malaria and national vigor. We may give our utmost devotion to the maintenance of educational opportunities, but unless we can help many to see how futile or how positively harmful these opportunities may become by being slightly denatured, we cannot rest content that our contribution has been adequate. More people must see the essential distinction that a brave American youth once urged between the turbulence of youthful enthusiasm and the turbulence of youthful passion.

The other essential to this League of Youth and Age is radical almost beyond comprehension; for it requires the acceptance, in America, of the strange doctrine that bigness is not always a mark of health. The limit to the weight which an institution of learning may carry and still

enjoy health is not rigidly fixed, any more than it is in the case of an individual. But in both cases it is clearly recognizable. A man may say that a few pounds will make little difference, and a college president may jocosely declare that the ideal size of an institution is "about three hundred more than you've got," but in both instances it is possible, even for the layman, to detect that stoutness has turned to fatty degeneration.

In spite of much joviality, and a habit of discrediting inquiry as only so much "destructive criticism," those in authority at many prosperous institutions tacitly admit the heavy unsoundness of the organization over which they preside. Daily they declare that the increase in the teaching force must be in proportion to the increase in student enrollment! As if that would solve the problem! All such efforts to "keep up with the procession," all systems of one kind and another that are proposed as correctives, must by their very relevance be superficial in character and constitute a reminder that a profound evil exists. The multiplication of teachers, so long as the institution remains one unit, or a group of large units, multiplies the great number of

purely mechanical functions to be performed. There must be more committees, more offices, more co-ordination, and more cross references and clerical intricacies of every kind. More and more the institution takes on the character of a vast clearing house.

And the student cannot escape neglect. He may go to an institution which maintains a ratio of one instructor for every ten students, and yet find himself in a popular course which has been elected by two hundred or five hundred of his fellows. Often, too, the complicated educational machine, like a telephone exchange which has too many subscribers, prevents him from getting what he wants, instead of affording him greater variety of choice. But his greatest loss springs from feeling so precariously attached to anything. He does not know his professors—not many students can possibly know a given professor well; and for the professor's assistants, whom he might know better, he probably harbors a mild disdain. He does not know many of his fellow students in the lecture room. He knows few residents in the college or university city, and these are often trivial girls of his own age. It is doubtful whether there is another place on

earth where a young man may experience such absolute isolation as in an institution of learning which has grown beyond its capacity to afford personal friendliness between teachers and students.

If we should become gravely and earnestly concerned with the making of smaller, less cumbersome units in education—units in which the individual need be neither coerced nor lost—we could find means of doing so. We could, for instance, if we are not too rabid with Anglophobia, employ the system of colleges at Oxford as a point of departure. In other words, we could, with some inconvenience, to be sure, redistribute any given university without removing any part of the institution from its established community. But instead of a complicated system of departments "pyramided" in one great bulk, we could have a number of co-ordinate small colleges in any of which a student might find a sufficiently various life. The old argument against this plan, namely, that it necessitates duplication of work, has long ago ceased to be relevant in America, since the large universities must now, within themselves, often duplicate courses, libraries, and even laboratories. If there should be a special

problem of duplication, some colleges might well "go in for" certain subjects more heavily than their neighbors; and there might be developed a very rich central library for the use of all. Such co-ordinate education, as contrasted with the present "pyramided" system, might, moreover, very well solve the problem of coeducation for the university that chanced to be educating both sexes. All could have the advantages of a central library for research, and of a generally enriched intellectual world, but both the women and the men would be freed from the hourly distractions which must disturb academic work when they are everywhere and at all times together.

Such a group of colleges, in which there would be opportunity for the student to know his teachers, his classmates, and himself, could be established in many of the newer undergraduate centers without serious material difficulties. When institutions are so new and so overgrown that they must annually consider extensive building projects, they might very easily do some of the expansion on a new basis. The chief obstacle is a childish and provincial fear that anything

based on a foreign university, even in small part, must consequently be un-American.

Another plan, a plan that really does possess more of the missionary spirit of America, is perfectly feasible. This would call for a kind of educational "swarming." In other words, if Harvard University, let us say, believes that she can care for three thousand undergraduates—a debatable point, but one which we can accept—then when there is a clamor for Harvard to go above that number, she might instead contribute to the establishment of a new Harvard in Indiana, Minnesota, or Texas. If there were in existence in that region a small institution with high ideals but inadequate support, Harvard could adopt this struggling college and give it some of her own strength. To be sure, this new member of the Harvard family would be without the immediate physical influence of Puritan New England. But the original Harvard promises soon to be without that, although she remain in Massachusetts! She could, nevertheless, contribute the best of the Harvard idea—just as Yale could contribute the best of the Yale idea—to the new hive in another quarter of the earth. In truth, there seems to be no other possible plan

of expanding the real Harvard. For if she can "assimilate" only three thousand undergraduates but admits ten thousand, in the process she ceases to be Harvard and becomes something else. The ten thousand do not attend the institution which they and their parents had in mind, at all. Many a Middle Western college of five hundred has ceased to be itself in the course of a few years, has been born into a new spirit—usually a less lovely one—merely by doubling or trebling its enrollment. Something more of itself than its mere name might have been kept if it had not yielded, but instead had given its enthusiasm, its thought, and some degree of its financial support to another of its kind in the borders of its own natural sphere of influence.

Such a proposal, I know, runs counter to all of the learned recommendations of commissions designated to give education standing and uniformity. But so do most of the interests of education! Despite every argument used to show that present means of transportation have made it possible for anybody to go to college anywhere, the fact remains and can easily be corroborated by a study of American college catalogues, that most undergraduates come from a relatively

small region roundabout the college. Often three-fourths of the students, or more, are from the one state—unless the institution is near a state boundary. And even where a few colleges have openly tried to make themselves "national" institutions, they have not modified the general truth importantly. In other words, any single institution does make education more probable for those who chance to be born near it. An overflowing college, then, that would multiply itself in other more or less remote regions instead of overfeeding itself into something monstrous at home, would not only be saving the sacred flame of personal initiative on its own campus, but by this new distribution of itself would make the torch burn brightly for many men who vaguely crave the light but who might otherwise never have it fall upon their faces.

V

Some reshaping of our educational world is overdue. No one who goes about extensively among colleges and universities can believe that the existing wholesale methods are to prevail in-

definitely. Everywhere teachers lift up their hands in horror and in supplication at the thought that they have not the opportunity to do that which they know to be most important. Everywhere, high-minded students go away from college with a painful impression that they have missed the chief thing for which they came. And despite a general inclination to treat all disappointment with existing conditions as "destructive criticism" or "knocking," colleges show signs of becoming responsive to the desperate need. The occasional genuine restriction of numbers, the establishment of honors courses for exceptional students, the introduction of "productive" work into the undergraduate curriculum, the established perceptorial system at Princeton, the extension of the system of tutors at Harvard, and the efforts of Antioch College to rediscover the universals of human experience—all these are only evidence that the clamorings of the individual spirit to be set free for its own kind of creative enterprise do not go wholly unheard.

No one can deny that the creative spirit has had a bad hour in the struggle. But when it has been desecrated long enough to reveal how futile

life must be without it, we shall turn to it anew as the source of such delight as men find on their earth. And there are those who are hopeful enough to believe that the desecration has already established adequate proof of its barren fruitage.

V: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE INDUSTRIAL SCHEME

The truest state of mind
rested in becomes false.

—EMERSON.

V: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE INDUSTRIAL SCHEME

I

THIS must be said at the outset: industry has become the greatest disintegrating force in present-day social life. It matters not where our sympathies may lie, we cannot fail to see the wreckage it is leaving on every hand. It disrupts towns; it reduces politicians to mendicant cowards; it splits church congregations wide open, and drives ten of thousands from the church altogether; it is a prohibited subject in many theaters; it is often an issue when teachers are to be employed to train our children; and in many higher institutions of learning it has become such a firebrand that presidents dare not entrust the discussion of the subject freely to the students, lest it inflame the entire academic community and alienate either the alumni or substantial patrons of learning.

Less fortunate still, everyone must now be classified either as a sympathizer with capital or

a sympathizer with labor, precisely as men are put into one of two categories in time of national military conflict. True, we write voluminously about how we are co-operating in industry, and illustrated journals display proudly the photographs of well-known capitalists clasping hands with well-known leaders of labor. Yet every thoughtful person who has taken the pains to investigate, and who is unafraid to face facts as he finds them, knows that the industrial world at a given hour is either in a state of war or in an armed truce.

I have no intention of belaboring one party to this conflict for the prejudiced delight of the other. Nor do I mean to bewail everything that has taken place since the rise of machine industry. No one can deny that, once we have taken the industrial scheme for granted, there has been progress in working-hours, in housing, and in hygiene. Sometimes this progress has been the result of good will and unquestioned high impulse on the part of employers; sometimes it has been the result of labor's uprising against intolerable conditions; sometimes it has been the result of intervention by the state. Interesting as it might be to fix the blame and the credit for this past,

it is much more to the point to accept the facts as they exist to-day, and cut through them cleanly with a principle that bears with it men's chief means of spiritual health. How does this industrial scheme that has robbed so large a part of the world of its natural heritage of good humor affect men's exercise of their pioneering powers —the clear vision, the emotional perception of life, and the victorious "extension of self-feeling" which are inevitable parts of the creator's experience? Does industry help a man to that high self-respect and soothing peace which come from feeling that some little portion of the world's interest emanates from him?

II

It is possible to answer these questions in full fairness only by sharing the industrial worker's experience—not as a "lark" to be written up for a good round sum, but as a sole means of earning one's daily bread. In no other manner can the worker's problem become real to us. We may study it from the outside and enlighten the non-working public with treatises on the psychology of the workingman, but at best our knowledge

will be devoid of well-grounded feeling. And unless we can feel about industrial life as the worker feels about it, we can know nothing of his problem or of the relation of industry and the creative spirit; for his problem and the creative spirit are predominantly matters of feeling.

Suppose we go to work some morning. We arrive—with several hundred or several thousand others—and we secure credit for being present when the whistle blows. We begin our day's work—the fascinating business of passing a heavy mold on to another man who passes it on to another, or perhaps pressing a lever that operates a punching machine, or knocking the top off eggs as they pass on an endless chain. It really makes much less difference than most people suppose. Occasionally a man whom we never see except at the plant, and who is suspected of being on "the other side," passes rather pompously but warily through. Usually his departure is the occasion for wise cracks by some of the more belligerent of our fellows. Sometimes he brings visitors with him, guests of the firm, who are interested in seeing how efficiently we work. It is possible that we have attended movies of ourselves at work, where by clipping the films the

efficiency engineers have shown us how to leave out movements which result in no profits for the company. In any event, we are reminded that we must be careful.

But we get through the forenoon, eat a lunch from a lunch box or tin pail, or from a table in the strictly sanitary restaurant in the plant, and then spend the entire afternoon in doing it all over again, five, ten, a hundred times. Of course we want to get away as soon as possible. Not one thing in the plant belongs to us; not one object upon which we labor will ever be thought of by anybody as having emanated from us. And if we were to move unexpectedly to some other industrial center, or were to be run down by an automobile, or were to jump into the river, the only possible difference that it could make would be that somebody should have to go to the trouble of breaking in new operatives for our places.

This is a sketch of clean, "attractive" work. Laborers by the hundreds of thousands have no such physical comforts. They may work in a mill where it is roasting hot throughout the day; they may come from their work grimy and greasy, or possibly sopping wet; they may spend the day in the bowels of the earth—with only a glimpse

of daylight at the beginning and the end of winter days—where coal damp and falling rocks are a constant menace to be added to black dirtiness, and where the ghosts of generations of fellow workers buried alive stalk the eternal night. In most respects, the man who tends a machine in a well-lighted building is the fortunate example of the industrial worker, and not the unfortunate. So if we work with him we may well count ourselves better off than the average.

We might, of course, endure such labor each day and retain a little of the adventurer's curiosity if only the world into which we emerge when we leave the factory in the evening offered any stimulus to our ingenuity. But this immediate world into which we escape is as full of the factory spirit as is the factory itself. Interminable rows of houses, with no more variation than that some of them have the entrance on the left instead of on the right, have been built for us and our fellow workers to live in; and everywhere about them, and in the monotonously straight streets, are the noisy, discordant children of industrial workers—miniature reflections of ourselves. And the letter rather than the spirit of social thoughtfulness has been observed

in equipping the town with up-to-date comforts. Somebody provides a Y. M. C. A. or a City Club; somebody hires a director for it. Somebody builds a workingman's hospital; somebody hires the nurses. Somebody establishes movies at strategic points. Somebody engages a playground director who teaches our children how to enjoy themselves. Somebody builds a church in order that the workingman may save his soul without unnecessary trouble; and somebody brings the hired uplifter who explains the only guaranteed way by which a soul may be saved. Or it may be that we have been destined to live in one of the most recent "model workingman's" cities where we are so painstakingly treated as incapable of doing anything for ourselves that our spiritual death is rapid and almost painless.

The industrial center is established upon the theory of isolation. It is consecrated to one idea, and quite probably to a single product. Its food comes from afar; its clothing comes from afar; its amusements come from afar. Nobody wishes to visit it except for business, or out of sociological curiosity; nobody wishes to live there who has ever lived anywhere else. Its entire life is scaled down to what factory workers are sup-

posed to require. The fascination and the relief of diversified interests are not to be had. The pulsing joy of new enterprises in the arts, in education, in government; the new developments in such practical occupations as fruit growing; the sight of plant life everywhere pushing up into the sunshine; the traditions and the processes by which the animal world is so interestingly distributed; the odor of the fields which one has plowed with one's own hands; the daily resilient feel of the turf under one's feet; the unobstructed view of the hills and the clouds and the stars—these are not a part of the life of a man who abides in a factory town. Even the newspaper which he reads—a "workingman's newspaper," be it remembered—has probably left out the very news that would fertilize his mind with ideas pleasantly remote from the ones he already possesses.

And as if he were not sufficiently isolated by his physical surroundings, he is further hemmed in by his spiritual inheritance. Always "in the back of his head" there is some vague memory of what his father or grandfather or great-grandfather experienced at the hands of industry. It is quite possible that some remote member of his

family worked under the conditions which P. Gaskell described in 1833: "He [the employer] considers the human beings who crowd his mill, from five o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock in the evening, but as so many accessories to his machinery, destined to produce a certain and well-known quantity of work, at the lowest possible outlay of capital. To him their passions, habits, or crimes are as little interesting as if they bore no relation to the errors of a system of which he was a member and supporter." [1] If he is past middle life, he can himself recall the days of absolute company control when his working, his buying, his eating, and his sleeping were company matters. I have seen perfectly fair-minded coal miners of "good Anglo-Saxon stock" forced to live this life. They walked two or three miles over the bleak wintry hills to work for the company, at such wage as the company chose to pay; they frequently found no work for the day and walked back, only to try again the next day; they received their pay through a wicket at the company store and their wives had to be content with such meager varieties of dry goods as this store chose to carry; and they slept in a company

[1] *The Manufacturing Population of England*, p. 72.

house—stuck up on stilts on the steep hillside—which no thoughtful farmer to-day would allow his dairy cattle to occupy during the winter season. This man remembers, moreover, how fellow laborers who were injured while in the company's employ were sometimes visited by a shrewd company lawyer who brought the company's regrets and best wishes, and who took great pleasure in offering him a gift of fifty or a hundred dollars on condition that he sign a "receipt"—which incidentally released the company forever from any claim for the injury.

These inheritances are constant subjects for family and group conversation. So when some leader in industry declares, no matter how sincere he may be, "that the men themselves shall first of all be happy and healthy, and that they shall thus be able to operate the machines with good spirit and efficiency," [1] the laborer is unable to see the case on its merits: he can see it only in the light of his inheritance. "Hear! Hear!" he chuckles in derision. "Of course he wants us happy and healthy. He wants to get every ounce of work out of us he can. That's how much he is interested in us!" So the worker is not only

[1] Attributed by the newspapers to Mr. Charles M. Schwab.

obliged by modern industry to do machine labor and to live in a machine-made community from which escape is not easy, but he is forced by his spiritual inheritance to think only from the point of view of a machine-made man.

III

Now when a man is confronted by an existence of this sort which stretches on and on only to the day when his record on the production graph will show a sharp decline and he will be displaced, how much is there to induce in him the slightest glow of inventiveness? "We know," we have been told, "that one of the best conditions for inventing is abundance of materials, accumulated experience, knowledge, which increase the chances of new association of ideas. . . . 'Genius for discovery,' says Jevons, 'depends on the number of these notions and chance thoughts that visit the mind of the inquirer. To be fertile in hypotheses, that is the first condition of finding.' The brain of the inventor must be full of forms, of melodies, of mechanical devices, of commercial combinations, of calculations, etc., according to the nature of his work. 'But it is indeed rare

that the ideas we find are precisely the ones we have looked for. In order to find, it is necessary to think out from one's subject.' " [1]

But the industrial worker's world does not provide him with this variety of material with which to work. He does hour after hour, and day after day, one process that by the simplest law of habit becomes fixed in his mind as a thing in itself, and not as something that is ever varied, ever broken up, ever reassociated into any other process. How different, for instance, from the work of a farmer, who not only engages in a vast number of different processes, according to the season, but who is constantly taking initiative, and exercising his powers of discrimination in arranging his work! A distinguished economist has justified machine industry by saying that it is no more humiliating to tend a machine than to milk a cow. But a farmer does not milk a cow all day! Not even the cow would endure that! The industrial worker, on the other hand, works so slavishly at one process that he will sometimes complete it from force of habit despite a conscious effort to turn aside. Little wonder that all

[1] Ribot, *L'Imagination créatrice,* p. 135. The lines he quotes at the end are from P. Souriau, *Théorie de l'Invention,* pp. 6-7.

of the ideas pertaining to his daily labor are firmly fixed! Little wonder that they are not fringed out or broken up so that they easily relate themselves to other passing ideas! And as we have seen, he is not encouraged to fruitful creative effort by any varied experience in the community in which he lives. He does not, for example, modify the principle of the machine he operates and carry it to a problem that his neighbor the farmer or his neighbor the artist may be puzzled with, for the simple reason that he has no neighbors who are farmers or artists, and he knows nothing about their problems. All of his neighbors are workingmen who operate machines not unlike his own.

But the spiritually stultifying effects of labor that is monotonous and intense do not end with a restricted experience. They extend to a premature fagging of the mind so that the high-pressure operative is in no state to make use of experience even if he possessed it. The very effort to simplify his movements is fatal to him. Says *American Medicine*,[1] discussing the elimination of the so-called superfluous motions in industry: "Whenever the muscles of the arms and

[1] *American Medicine*, New Series Vol. VIII, p. 200.

fingers, or of any part of the body, for that matter, undertake to do a definite piece of work, it is physiologically imperative that they do not accomplish it by the shortest mathematical route. A rigid to-and-fro movement is possible only to machinery; muscles necessarily move in curves, and that is why grace is characteristic of muscular movement and is absent from a machine. The more finished the technic of a workman and the greater his strength, the more graceful are his movements, and, what is important in this connection, *vice versa.* A certain flourish, superfluous only to the untrained eye, is absolutely characteristic of the efficient workman's motions.

" 'Speeding-up' eliminates grace and the curved movements of physiological repose, and thus induces an irresistible fatigue, first in the small muscles, second, in the trunk, ultimately in the brain and nervous system. The early result is a fagged and spiritless worker of the very sort that the speeder-up's partner—the 'efficiency engineer,' will be anxious to replace by a younger and fresher candidate, who, in his turn, will soon follow his predecessor if the same relentless process is enforced."

So not only the industrial ideal, but the un-

natural simplifications of processes by which industry would attain its ideal must be regarded as unfriendly to the creative spirit.

Let us suppose, however, that despite discouraging conditions, a workingman does have an idea which he believes might be important to some one. What becomes of it? What becomes of it if he believes it might be valuable to the company that employs him? If this company maintains a "modern" factory with research laboratories and a force of inventors, his idea is submitted, if he has good luck, to the company's specialists. If they think well of it and believe it could be utilized advantageously, they recommend its purchase, and he is paid for it—sometimes well. If his idea is worth nothing to the company, but much to its competitors, his employers may buy it at the lowest safe price and put it on the shelf.

But what becomes of his idea if it is worth nothing to the company and nothing to its competitors—because it has none—yet is rich with possibilities for mankind? To take a hypothetical instance, suppose he is working for the Pullman Company. If he proposes an improvement of some detail of a sleeping-car, his idea will

probably be welcome. If, however, he should come forward with an idea for comfort in night travel that would, if realized, immediately displace Pullman cars, the case would be altered. Of course, the Pullman Company does not wish to "junk" all of its perfectly good cars, or sacrifice the numerous millions invested in them. It wants to improve sleeping-cars, but it does not wish to precipitate a financial cataclysm. The company's product is standardized; it is widely distributed in a complex economic world that in some measure has accepted this specific standardization as permanent, and built other standardizations upon it. Naturally the minds of the board of control—if not the minds of the consulting engineers—would be closed against anything not in its essence a Pullman idea. And in varying degrees it is so with other great industries. The independent, free-lance, "wild" inventive mind that constantly proposes new paths of comfort and interest for the race finds it more and more difficult to break through.

No less must the creativeness suffer that inclines toward art. Everywhere life is expressed rigidly. One may see only grotesque blocks of buildings with stiff, harsh lines; one may hear

only discordant, hard noises; one may smell only unmistakable, depressing odors; one may encounter only an unyielding impersonal method in the very matters where persons are concerned. Is one to marvel if such centers contribute little to the sensitiveness and high good humor through which the artistic impulse moves? Is one to marvel if the poetry, let us say, which does at intervals emanate from such an environment reflects the hardness, the impersonality, and the dirt?

The industrial scheme, however, does its greatest injury by affecting the body of workers in whom the inclination to do creative work is not strong enough, perhaps, to result in important inventiveness, yet strong enough to make them ill at ease when their lives are wholly routine. Of course, in any group there are always some devitalized creatures who never crave anything less irksome than what they have; but they are in the minority. Most men, wherever they belong, received at birth enough of a heritage to keep them inquiring and sensitive for many years. Furthermore, by our system of universal education we have carried to these very men and women a new sensitiveness, a new aspiration, which renders the monotony of machine industry more and

more repulsive. And is there anyone who would say that the way out is by ceasing to educate, in order that men and women may the more willingly submit to the industrial scheme?

If you send a man to the task of truing hairsprings in a watch factory where he can actually perform his task best if he is nine-tenths dead, he will, if he is a live man, become nervous and irritable and rebellious and destructive. If you select the most amiable college youth you can find and submit him to the monotony of industrialized timber cutting, he will eventually have the same experience. Eventually, too, such work breaks the spirit hopelessly. Once a year, at least, I visit the small industrial community where I lived as a boy. I see my former schoolmates, once cheerful, intelligent youngsters of sturdy inheritance, now at forty reduced to a stooped old age. The challenge has gone from their eyes; the house they purchased in order to get away from "company row" is less cared for than formerly; they are sending the children to high school in the hope that they "can get away from here." In every word they utter, in every movement they make, they reveal the suffering of the man who has been denied the right to unfold

his life from within. This man begins to discover his instincts; he wants more of everything; he is conscious of his own insignificance; he is envious; he is either pugnacious or sullen; he is always sure that he is getting the worst of the bargain; and, since "the other fellow" is always winning at his expense—so he believes—he is ready to destroy the other fellow's power. Who can estimate the evil that must spring from such intensive cultivation of men's bad humor and primal ugliness?

And then, as if it were not enough that the industrial worker should be robbed of his rightful opportunity to initiative by those who employ him, he is often made to suffer by the very organization which he has entered for his own best defense. For it matters not how vociferously labor leaders may declare to the contrary, many of the unions do encourage a deadening listlessness. Perhaps they cannot be very justly blamed for trying to restrict output in general when it seems to the advantage of their members to do so; they see the employing class doing the same thing whenever occasion arises. But in the process of working for what is called the general good, they frequently force the in-

telligent, eager man to hold back until his life becomes a slow spiritual suicide. When we add this element of the worker's experience to all those elements that spring more directly from the industrial method, we can begin to see how much immediate hope there is for the joy in labor and the "Christian industrial peace" about which we hear much from high places daily.

IV

This unfavorable estimate of the industrial scheme is not made as a preliminary to any proposal that we turn back for salvation to the guild system of the late Middle Ages, or to the simplified life of the days before the Industrial Revolution, or to any other idealized age about which it may be fashionable to speak. We shall never turn back to one of these periods or to any other. As though we could swing wholly free of what is! Whatever amelioration may come, whatever positive development, will in some manner grow out of the system that exists to-day.

It will not come, however, from any attempt at external corrective which leaves the heart of

the matter untouched. For this reason, it is not prudent to hope for too much from any simple extension of co-operative management. There is virtue in that proposed remedy, but it will never effect anything approaching a final cure, because the worker's grievance, whether he is always conscious of its character or not, is really less economic than mental. The sharing of responsibility may help a man to feel that industry does in a way emanate from him, but this feeling will constantly be strained to the utmost if he is obliged to go on in some highly subdivided part of a process eight hours a day, every working day in the year. Furthermore, it will be found, as employers move toward a co-operative basis, that the industrial scheme has gone far to unfit men for important responsibility; they have ceased to be responsible beings. They cannot, therefore, be expected to transform themselves overnight into sensitive souls whose one concern is to make money for the establishment, simply because they are to receive, let us say, a certain percentage of the excess profits. Many employers are already discovering this fact, much to their amazement,

and are attributing the failure to some inherent defect in workingmen.

The worker's difficulty in entering wholeheartedly into any co-operative plan is increased, too, by his industrial inheritance. When he takes stock in the company, if he has the privilege of doing so, he is in constant danger of feeling that it is all just a little game designed to keep him from going on strikes at inopportune times; that somehow he is bartering away his right to be a free man. And unfortunately, in some instances, that is what he does; for employers sometimes enter into co-operative schemes solely as a means of maintaining the underlying principles—and the underlying vices—of the present system. So between the mere extension of co-operative plans and a right industrial state there is a long, uncertain period of re-educating the worker in responsibility and of re-establishing his confidence in the good faith of the employing class. At best, we have but a fair proposal based upon an inherently wrong industrial method.

In order to get at the heart of the matter it will be necessary, first, to relieve the oppressiveness of the factory town; and secondly, to break

up the benumbing monotony of the industrial worker's employment itself. Truly this could not be called a trivial undertaking! And yet it is in some degree possible of attainment.

As for the breaking up of the factory town, we are already beginning to hear much. But when we visit the industrial centers between the Alleghenies and Chicago, the fact is borne in upon us with sickening power that relief from present conditions is still only in the stage of academic discussion. Yet we can have relief whenever science catches up with humanity. Suppose, for instance, that we had a perfected method of producing electric current by means of windmills. Ten years ago, such a project was roundly jeered at. To-day at least one scientist has suggested that power will ere long be developed in this fashion in England; reports emanating from France discuss a mill that will produce a few hundred horsepower; and certain American farm journals have advertised small mills for the producing of current on farms. Now if enough efficient mills were established in such a state as Minnesota, where the winds are strong and dishearteningly constant, or if enough devices of any other sort

whatsoever were established throughout the country so that current at a given point could be abundant and cheap, we could leave the dirty coal in the earth, we could therefore disregard its transportation, and distribute many industries in pleasant, uncongested places; and the people who worked there could have some of the natural environment in which man seems designed to live. Any such plan, and all such plans, will help to break up the high-pitched monotony of the center in which the industrial worker must live now. If we wish to see in advance a little of the superiority of this new environment, we need only to visit the New England villages where perhaps one small mill has existed for many years and where the operatives live as a normal part of a community, in a right relation with natural life, and compare these operatives with those of the same blood who work in the murky centers of the Ohio Valley.

As for breaking up the operative's benumbing employment, there must be work in two directions. If the entire scheme of modern industry is not to be discarded—and there are many parts of it that ought to be kept—there must be, first of all, a reduction in the length of the day devoted

to highly subdivided labor. So far as I know, Benjamin Franklin was the first American to raise the question of a four-hour day. That such a period for the performance of the routine labor of the world could be adequate, probably seemed absurd to some of his contemporaries—even if all the people should work. Certainly to-day, despite the general acceptance of a working day much shorter than in Franklin's time, the four-hour day is almost inconceivably short. When farmers and teachers and artists and scientific investigators work eight, ten, twelve, or fifteen hours, of their own volition, why should the factory operative work only four? Yet in some of the more invariable occupations, no longer day is tolerable. There are limits beyond which human beings with active minds cannot submit to routine.

Now it is toward saving this short day from becoming a great menace in itself, that effort, in the second place, must be directed. It scarcely need be mentioned that the danger in the short day—and it is very great—lies in the probability that there would be nothing of wholesome interest for the worker to do when the brief period of routine labor ended. He would still

think of labor as something disagreeable and inhuman, from which one should seek constant escape, just as he thinks of it to-day; the joy of labor would still be only a subject for dining-room discussion. It would be necessary to supplement the four hours of labor with some creative employment.

It is easy, of course, to brush aside with a sweeping gesture any such idea as only one more unworkable, idealistic scheme. But if employers were to take it up with enthusiasm, or even with the desperation which the existing ugliness of temper might well induce, they would inevitably find in it a way to some of the industrial stability which they now seek in vain. And in addition, the plan is full of promise for a more beautiful world.

To take a small industry which is nevertheless an essential one, the manufacturer of china-ware, if he were to turn his attention to the matter with honest zeal, could, without any great expense or any serious modification of his plant, allow his decorators who now spend the entire day in stamping designs or spinning on a band of color, to spend two or three or four of their hours each day in making designs of their own,

and in doing hand decoration. This work would afford relief from monotony; it would help the worker to rediscover joy in labor; it would dissociate the idea of hand-painted china from lurid wedding gifts; and it would eventually bring into existence a new and perpetually increasing body of customers who would buy with discrimination and who would be glad to pay for the privilege. A similar plan might be worked out in the furniture industry. Slowly a number of the operatives who revealed imagination could develop into craftsmen in wood, to the satisfaction of themselves and everyone else. The present revival of interest in furniture might easily make this part of the industry the more profitable part. And in such an industry as bookbinding, which has now come to be of considerable importance, the principle could be carried out in like manner. In many industries, a longer period of experimentation and a greater modification would be necessary; in many, nothing less revolutionary than the establishing of creative employments that have no immediate relation to the work in the mill will be required. And in all industries it would be necessary to begin with the young, fresh workers; for sub-

divided labor has so reduced the old ones to mental automatons that they cannot even want to turn to anything that requires the exercise of unused muscles and an unused brain.

The advantage of such an approach over all proposals that we discard the present and go back to the simplicity of some other time lies in the fact that it professes no finality. There would remain a full opportunity to demonstrate the ultimate worth of the best of machine technique. And it should be demonstrated. No good reason can be advanced why anyone should so worship hand-made products that he should prefer them to machine-made products that are in all respects better, provided we have found a way to save the man who tends the machine. On the other hand, we should have a full opportunity to see clearly, as Henri Lorin several years ago reminded us with biting naïveté, that, after all, social life and organization are good only because they are the conditions necessary to individual life. To be sure, there are many obstacles; heads of industry would have to exercise all of the good humor and creative-mindedness which they possess. But when the indus-

trial world is aflame—or smoldering—and men declare that they are in a struggle to the death, dare any proposal be put aside lightly when it touches the fundamental evil from which the warfare springs?

VI: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND SCIENCE

Pioneers! O Pioneers!

—WHITMAN.

VI: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND SCIENCE

I

Will it do for a layman to speak about science? Or about science and religion? Or about the influence that science might have on men's everyday spiritual outlook?

If a layman could, for instance, disregard what Mr. Haldane has so breezily said about the Dædalian escape which he sees for men in the revelations of research, or the ghastly Icarian fall which the same research promises to the prophetic vision of Mr. Bertrand Russell; if he could see unfailingly beyond the tinsel of the "newspaper scientists" or could cast wholly aside the demonic blackness which Mr. Bryan has found to be the appropriate habit of all young knowledge; if he could forget whatever passionate opinion or antagonism has been concentrated upon the subject through many years, and see it for a moment as a means of quickening human consciousness in fruitful ways, or of discourag-

ing it, might he hope to have a considered hearing?

II

In so far as science affects the lives of those whose interests are clearly without the scientific field, the results must cause no little disappointment; for science does not give to these men and women the zealous, inquiring, creative spirit which the scientist himself professes to enjoy.

A part of this failure may be explained without one word of serious criticism for the scientist. He must be a disinterested observer of the facts he studies; he could not be a good scientist otherwise. From this habit of mind he very easily falls into the practice of being disinterested in his relations with his fellow mortals whenever science is concerned—and often when it is not. Thus it comes about that what is a sacred virtue in scientific method often becomes an unsocial vice when carried into general conduct. The scientist's disinterestedness, moreover, inevitably estranges him from certain persons who ought to appreciate his work, but who desire to come to an understanding of it with

a too trivial facility. He shrinks from the cheapness of their prattle or the unfairness of their disdain. Often he suffers in solitary despair because those who should appreciate him most appreciate him not at all. Small wonder that he looks for solace in his land of scientific dreams, and troubles himself little with any opinion which the uninitiated may have of him or his work.

But the failure of the scientist to stimulate a courageous, creative spirit in the lay mind does not end with this much-bewailed indifference on his part. Misfortune is constantly resulting from an antagonism induced in him by the hotly contested struggle which science has from the first had to make for its life. From the time when Huxley delivered his first lecture on Evolution, down even to the present hour, the scientist has been obliged to present his cause before a hostile audience. Not only has he been compelled to meet the opposition that inevitably confronts new ideas, but he has been obliged to present new ideas seemingly in conflict with something especially sacred in the minds of most men. Huxley was well aware of his own great difficulty. So he not only developed his First

Lecture with such tactful unfolding that he made it into a model of persuasive writing for all time, but he carefully avoided the use of even a single phrase that might unnecessarily arouse antagonism. Instead of plunging into his case by setting the evolutionary theory over against the Biblical account of creation, he read from Milton's account in *Paradise Lost*—an account, of course, based on the Bible—and then compared the evolutionary theory with the "Miltonic hypothesis." But even such tact could not save him from the wrath of the more dogmatic of his listeners. And his disciples and successors have been no more tactful and no more successful.

From this antagonism with which the scientist has been heard, and from the attacks with which he has been hounded—primarily, but not wholly, by the church—he has developed a very clear anti-religious complex. Not only do most scientists whom I know take a sort of boyish pride in being unmindful of what the layman holds sacred, but they seem to enjoy making all sacred and religious or poetic experience seem "unscientific" and trivial. Is there any good reason why a biologist while speaking on prenatal conditions in the human species should

turn aside to scoff at "Hebrew myths"? Such an aside cannot have any clear relation to his subject; it seems most unscientifically dragged in! Or why should a lecturer on the origins of radio have his discourse bristling with flippant remarks about the "spiritual life"—he meant the theological life—and about the feeling of mystery in general? Or why should an astronomer of great repute take occasion to explain that religious hope is groundless—especially when he might not be in possession of all the evidence?

We must not lose sight of the sequence. Inasmuch as the church, the organized custodian of the Christian faith, has from the first been the open enemy of modern science, it would be only natural to find the scientist trying to get along without the church. This he has usually done. But he has gone one step farther. Instead of making science a friendly neighbor of the highest religion, as he might possibly have done had he been allowed to go his own way unmolested, he has consciously or unconsciously tried to make scientific method a competitor of religion or a substitute for it. Not every scientist, to be sure, has done this; for some have managed to stay in the church despite its hos-

tility; and some who have been unable to endure the hostility have nevertheless remained ready to say that religion marks the highest point in man's activities. Yet we are somewhat startled, in this decade, if we find a man of science who is religious in the sense that Faraday was. And if a group of the most generous-minded scientists prepare a round-robin which declares that there need be no conflict between science and religion, we do not expect an overwhelming majority of the scientists to sign, even if they have had the privilege of formulating their own definition of religion.

Now as soon as we see (1) how indifferent the scientist has been about giving an intelligent account of himself to the layman, and (2) how he has left an impression that what he engages in is a motive power in life that competes with religion or—according to some—may even displace it, we are in a position to see how science affects the creative spirit among those who are not themselves scientists. Men must be constantly aware of science because it is everywhere adding conveniences to their lives. They nevertheless know little about it essentially; it is far enough removed from their lives to be shrouded

in mystery. They read, moreover, in popular books which purport to be authoritative, that science is revolutionizing men's lives. So, when "science says"—through such scraps of information as come to them—that there is no hope of immortality as they understand it; when science says that man has only a short period on his earth—perhaps only a few million years!—and then the accident of biological existence will end; when science says that we are only a bundle of instincts, just as our caveman and animal ancestors were; when professors in colleges for young ladies "lay a scientific foundation" for their courses in social ethics by giving illustrated lectures on the stages through which the human animal passes before birth; when emphasis everywhere is placed unmistakably on the fact that we are just animals and that the best to be expected after the thin veneer is off is animal behavior—when numberless uninterpreted reports of this character constitute what science says to the average layman concerning the relation of science and conduct, how can it surprise anyone if the popular effect of science is to induce spiritual myopia and consequently a feeling of life's futility? So far as the uninitiated public is concerned, science

exalts animalistic qualities by keeping them always before the consciousness, and establishes a feeling that since man is, after all, a bundle of instincts which pull and haul him in every direction, it is of no avail to try to control them so that life will straighten away toward any remote ideal. The gorilla one-step and the caveman glide are so much more palpable than any rhythmic dance in the name of poetry or worship!

Science, then, must bear a full part of the blame for the short-sighted, what's-the-difference, instinct-gratifying life that everywhere overrides the creative spirit. Not that the scientist himself experiences that life! He usually works with the exalted fervor of the religious enthusiast. And were science not so generally understood as constituting a final, fatalistic philosophy of life, the layman could readily share this exaltation. So far as the facts are concerned, the certain doom which the astronomer preaches, the doom that will come when the solar system runs down, is no more terrifying in itself than the doom of some specially God-sent conflagration which many of us have heard preached in orthodox pulpits. There is no reason why either of them should claim our undivided attention.

Some unregenerate manufacturer of high explosives may anticipate both of them. Or perchance both the scientists and the theologians may modify their views—as they are constantly doing—and give us an indefinite stretch of Octobers and Aprils! Nor is the mechanistic theory, newly contrived to explain the universe, one whit more mechanistic than the theory of the universe which the mediæval theologians left to us in their interesting charts. But there is this difference, and it is all-important: Beyond the mechanistic universe and the abysmal future of the theologian there was an ideal, a conception of ultimate justice, of harmony, of self-mastery, which rendered both the mechanism and the abyss relatively inconsequential. Beyond the findings of science there might be a similar high conception; in fact, it might be the same one. But science, in its struggle with the theologians, has allowed the layman to believe that the high conception was swept away with the nonessential trappings of theology. Science has consecrated herself to truth, but has lent herself conveniently to the promotion of error.

Likewise does the layman understand that science has lent itself hopelessly to international

destruction. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful whether those who work in the field of science have joined in warfare between nations with any more burning enthusiasm than have the leaders of the church. But the church at least looks toward peace in the abstract. As an ideal, peace is so much to be desired that the church will beguile itself into thinking that it is fighting "this war" to end wars; it believes that men may eventually be "saved" to such an extent that their feeling of justice and kinship will prevent them from waging war at all. This is the widely disseminated, popular doctrine of the church, the doctrine which the people understand the church to believe in, whether they hope to see the church put it into practice soon or not. Science, on the other hand, has either spread abroad, or has been silently submissive while others have spread abroad for her, the simple doctrine that we are animals, that animals are pugnacious by instinct, and that we may, therefore, count on wars indefinitely in the future. And atop this doctrine, science declares, and declares with prostrating truth, that she can make future wars more terrible than any the world has ever seen.

In such prospects, where man is to engage

futilely in a more and more destructive, dinosaur sort of existence, there can be little to fill the layman with a spirit of creative emulation. And were this all that men of scientific learning could do for the layman, the most hopeful of us might well admit that the laboratories should be closed and the scientists allowed to devote themselves to maceration and the copying of ancient manuscripts. No one need expect a man to rise to beneficent creative effort when he is perpetually reminded that he is more debased than he had thought, and when he is assured, "on the highest authority," that the accidental, ghastly way which he treads will bring him at last to exactly nothing at all.

III

Where, then, after this discouraging view, rests one's faith in science to open new ways for the creative spirit? For science, in spite of every popular misconception, offers to men one of their greatest opportunities for the kind of exploring which brings them a satisfying realization of existence. It is not easy to explain this faith, especially in few words, but it rests, first, in the

life of the scientist himself when he is engrossed in those pure sciences which most nearly relate themselves to philosophic thought, and, secondly, in the scientist's undeveloped ability to make the layman understand and feel that science does not constitute in itself the complete hierarchy of human aspiration.

To be sure, the scientist is sometimes not thought of as belonging among the creators at all except when he chances to be concerned with mechanical invention. He deals with remote, cold facts; and it is easy for the popular mind to think of him as an analytic, emotionless person who leads a remote, cold life. Sometimes, moreover, he himself enjoys thinking that he is such a person. It is but natural that he, like any other explorer, should occasionally see his world a little less romantically, perhaps, than do the kindred spirits to whom he causes his world to stand revealed. For him it may, after all, seem to be a somewhat matter-of-fact world.

Yet if we stop to reflect, no poet lives in a world which stretches away toward more fascinating infinites. There are the staggering and sublime reaches of the heavens; there is the mystery of an ethereal medium which has no trouble

in carrying the requisite traffic to provide us with warmth, to light our way, to provide us with food, and to give us means of instant communication between the most distant points on our little earth; there is forever the unexplained persistence of osmosis; there are unbelievable conversions of "matter" into "energy" and of energy into matter; there is the baffling field of light, which ought to illuminate itself, but which yet remains so imperfectly explored; there are Bohr atoms, and electrons, and subtle questions of relativity, all of which yield themselves only to an imaginative power that is customarily thought of as belonging in the realm of the arts. Can anyone—except those enraged blind who refuse to see—fail to discern here the possibilities that offer themselves for undreamed-of exploring and undreamed-of enlightenment?

And the scientist's method, as well as his subject-matter, exemplifies the liberated spirit with which the creator works. He must see—see not alone accurately, but comprehendingly, imaginatively, receptively. Likewise he must bring to his work the emotional warmth which every great quest requires; yet he must be ready at all times to put aside in coldest blood any evidence that is

insufficient or untrue. Disinterestedly—as the artist does—he must scrutinize, weigh, compare, accept, revise, or discard—disinterestedly, yet with the greatest interest. This process, anyone who has ever carried on the simplest investigation knows, is infinitely difficult. Always one arrives at a stage in the engrossing concern of the problem when the facts begin to bear off in a certain direction; and from that time on, as one nonagenarian chemist expressed it, "only the facts that are for one will come to one's mind." The seeker, then, must be on his guard lest the light which guides him is not the light of truth, but only a will-o'-the-wisp of personal preference. He must come to see that even for the man of the utmost honesty of intent, being honest is the most difficult task in life. The very eagerness for truth which leads him on his sublime way is constantly tempting him—tempting him to accept some little part of the humorist's formula that first you get the facts, then you distort them. Yet the whole purpose of his labor is gone unless he puts aside the temptation and works with a sincerity that is without parallel save in the highest art and in worship.

"Science," Huxley once observed, "seems to

me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before a fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all risks to do this." [1] Above this there is no other way. Such a complete surrender brings not only the truest possible understanding of the facts, but a sense of victory over the little demons of prejudice and the perverse little dishonesties which forever beset a man's self.

In his own world of research, then, the scientist is not living the philosophy that all is futile. He does not go about his own task with any of the appearance of guaranteed futility which science has contributed—more or less unwittingly, it is true—to the popular mind. Once his life is known, its zeal and high consecration are inspiriting even to those who are little interested in science. Witness, for instance, Faraday and

[1] From a letter to Charles Kingsley, September 23, 1860. See Leonard Huxley's Life and Letters of Thomas H. Huxley, Vol. I, p. 235.

Clerk Maxwell and Hertz giving their lives to experiments which could not possibly be very heavy with significance to their contemporaries, yet which, when the "sociological conditions" became fertile, made radio a possibility; witness Pasteur and all the array of noble spirits who have given their lives, often prematurely, to the subjugation of disease; witness Poincaré, whose mathematical and philosophic genius sent scores of young men joyously away on all sorts of new quests; witness such a scientific inventor as Michael Pupin, who has written about the stars with more rapturous abandon than have any of his non-scientific fellow poets; witness the greatest of all contemporary instances—that of the Curies. When the raging pygmies who infuriatingly champion one kind or another of "religious" or "scientific" truth have worn themselves out in their frenzy, they should sit down in the quiet of some retreat and read the chronicle of these two fellow human beings who lived on a modest workingman's wage, and denied themselves the comforts which a truck-driver would regard as necessities, in order that they might go life's way poetically together, discussing social progress, committing lines of great verse to memory

(Pierre Curie also wrote a little verse), dreaming over their beloved children, and giving the world radium without money and without price.

IV

Now it is just the difference between this frank, exalted life of the scientist himself and the life of the layman as he is likely to be influenced by scientific method, which clears the way to the other ground for faith in the eventual influence of science on the creative spirit. The scientist professes to have a limitless outlook; he insists upon an infinite life for himself. And as some little part of the boundless field becomes clear to his vision, he experiences that satisfying extension of self-feeling which is always a characteristic part of creative endeavor. On the other hand, the effect of science on the layman, as he has been touched by odds and ends of scientific information, has been to give him a philosophy of life at once restrictive and discouraging. Everything is too literal, too much analyzed into its lowest terms. Life cramps one as a small room cramps a dancer who would carry her rhythmic movements to completeness. So thor-

oughly has science thus circumscribed all life that to call anything "unscientific" means not only that it is outside the range of scientific study, but that it is somehow of small consequence.

We must, then, if we are to have science established in the lay mind as the servant of man's spirit and not as some monster of enveloping darkness, have a reconstituted hierarchy of life in which scientific method is not all-inclusive, or even apparently so. This does not mean that science should be hobbled. Quite the contrary. For it is one of the numerous paradoxes of our earthly life that science thrives best when she is modestly helping people to a life that is not in the ordinary sense scientific.

"Real life, religion, and science," observes Emile Boutroux, "seem to us to be governed by principles foreign to one another, or even incompatible: that is so because our nature is loath to admit the hierarchy which should obtain among them. Of the three kinds of power manifested in the world—force or the power of bodies, thought or the power of minds, charity or the power of the heart—we are inclined by our nature to give the sovereignty to the first; and to the third, the last rank. And it so happens that when they are

hierarchized in that manner, these three powers do not succeed either in agreeing, or in developing themselves according to their proper ends. Suppose, on the contrary, that by a deep conversion of the soul, the order of charity be considered as the superior one, that of the mind as the next, and that of the senses as subordinated to the two others: under those conditions harmony and internal peace will replace discord, and each of the three powers will be liberated and enabled to attain its full development." [1]

Such a fusing of science into a new humanism promises to the layman the unhampered outlook, the unrestricted diversity of spiritual exploration and method, essential to the creative spirit. He can thus accept the importance of science without feeling that every "unscientific" avenue to new experience and new knowledge is necessarily false or "unreal." There is fitness in the fact that this new humanism should have its greatest champion in George Sarton, the historian of science. When sufficient time has elapsed to give us perspective, we shall see that this young scholar's career in Ghent, his exile

[1] *La Sainteté de Pascal,* H. F. Stewart. Avant-propos par Emile Boutroux, pp.VIII-IX.

by the Germans in 1914, his re-establishment in America, the unheralded sacrifices which he and his wife made in order that he might continue pointing out to all who would hear how progress comes only with the increase of positive knowledge, yet how knowledge, when separated from the other elements of civilization, may be negative or destructive—when once we are able to see in perspective, we shall know that his heroic career has been one of the significant facts of the early twentieth century. He, as a scientist, has dared to say that "the man of science is great only to the extent of his devotion not simply to truth, but to other men."

When one reflects, it is not difficult to see, moreover, why such a man as Pasteur, the great forerunner of this new humanism, should be also a man with a conception of the infinite which enabled him to see all things clearly and in fair proportion. This man, to whom Sir William Osler referred as "the most perfect man who had ever entered the Kingdom of Science," and who gave his genius humbly to those who had to bear the heat and isolation of countless wearisome days—in order to save their silkworms, to save their sheep, to save their children from hydro-

phobia and diphtheria—this man could also write: "Positivism does not take into account the most important of positive notions, that of the Infinite. . . . I see everywhere the inevitable expression of the Infinite in the world. . . . The idea of God is a form of the idea of the Infinite. . . . Blessed is he who carries within himself a God, an ideal, and who obeys it; ideal of art, ideal of science, ideal of the gospel virtues, therein lie the springs of great thoughts and great actions; they all reflect light from the Infinite."

This infinite, somehow, has been too often forgotten or concealed by the scientist when he has spoken to the layman. The word itself smacks of the outworn theology which the scientist would ignore. He is afraid he might concede a point. Too often, moreover, a certain voluble type of scientist who enjoys speaking to the public talks glibly of what the infinite does not contain, as though he were invoicing a department store; when the only negative assertion that he should risk making about infinity is that it is not finite.

The layman does not ask that the scientist provide him with a new theology. For his own spiritual health, however, he does require a sense of freedom to believe out in diverse directions

when questions of belief arise—just as the scientist does. When the scientist tells him, and tells him as though he cared for his case, how he might enter into the experience which the scientist himself enjoys, and when he is careful to show that science with her imperfect methods would not presume to be the ultimate philosophy of life, but only one of the approaches, the layman will have his life wholesomely colored by the habits of accuracy and the "complete surrender" of the scientific method, yet will feel free to do exploring and believing on the initiative of inner authority. And in the enlightened power of such a life there is hope for a human perfection which we have not yet known.

VII: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND ART

What makes him a great artist is a high fervour of spirit, which produces a superlative, instead of a comparative clarity of vision.

—GALSWORTHY.

VII: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND ART

I

Despite all reluctance to rob numerous grave people of a cherished topic of conversation, I venture to declare that American materialism is not the sole enemy of American art. As a matter of simple fact, no enemy of the arts is preventing them from enjoying various degrees of progress; and as for materialism, they progress not only despite it, but sometimes, as we shall see, because of it. Incidentally, it might be observed that even were the case otherwise, art possesses no magic power by which it could transmute this materialism with one swift gesture.

There are, however, two obstacles which just now prevent progress from being much more rapid, and they come logically within the domain of art for consideration. For these hamper all efforts made by the organized forces of art to quicken the creative spirit widely, and they hamper them from within.

The first of these two obstacles is the cult of degradation. It would be interesting but very dangerous to say where this cult probably had its origin. One might speculate on the subject for a decade and always be wrong. But from whatever hands its members received the torch, they do not now hold it high, but low, in order that no sewer may escape them.

Now a man's desire to explore a sewer may be greatly to his credit. Certainly not one hindrance should ever prevent him from exploring a sewer to his heart's content. He may even be praised for wishing to clean a sewer out. But when he begins to take pride in feeling at home in a sewer, and when his friends become evangelistic in proclaiming that a sewer is the one great haven where the unfettered should come to rest, there might reasonably be some question about the man's spiritual health, and about his relation to artistic progress.

Without the least mushy sentimentalism over America, it must be said that this cult seems exotic among us. We may not be the least bit better than any other people on the face of the earth, but we have plenty of fresh air and sunshine, and we have accumulated only a limited

amount of sordidness; we have not been in America long enough to have it otherwise. But those of the cult of degradation laugh at the thought of anything invigorating or wholesome in America. Life is not even a good joke; it is just gray dirtiness. Life is not even a bad dream; it is just chaos. Life is not hell for the unfortunate; it is hell for everybody. And art in America! Bah! So they turn in hope to Europe, as all of us do when art comes to our thoughts. But how interestingly they reason! In Europe, they argue, there has been a great art. There has been also no little dirtiness of one kind or another. So if we will but import the dirtiness, great art will follow necessarily. In the meantime, no subterranean passage at home must be left unoccupied if it will help a man to feel debased.

It is strictly on the basis of art that I have a quarrel with this cult. Inevitably its adherents must produce much bad art themselves; for one of the conditions on which good art is produced is that the artist shall find a relatively disinterested significance in the material he treats. As soon as he grows too eager to use his material as propaganda, his artistic relation

with his material ceases to be an honest one. So we have ramping pagans making their particular dogmas on morals jut out too far in their stories. We have anæmic, pimply whippersnappers professing to write the great American novel or play or poem, or paint the great American masterpiece, by bringing into high relief the sordidness in which they find their greatest comfort. Their fellow "cultists" slap them on the back in congratulation, and turn to a mystified public to proclaim that, at last, real artistic genius has appeared in America.

In this turning to the public with the propagandist's zeal, lies the chief injury which the "cultists" do to the cause of a more virile national art. They are understood and perhaps properly evaluated by their fellow workers in the artistic field. But with the public the case is different. People may be wholly unlettered in the ways of art, yet in possession of a perfectly sound emotional outlook upon life. So when they see this work of the "cultists," they feel its essential dishonesty as certainly as they feel the difference between Abraham Lincoln and a ward politician. Before it they experience

nothing of the disinterested exaltation which one enjoys before a work of art that has been conceived in high honesty. When they venture to protest, they are told that they "don't know art when they see it"; they are made to understand that the sewer is sacred ground. People who regard it in any other manner are narrow. So the artist-in-the-rough who is everywhere throughout the public—the one who is the forerunner of the man who will do the "great American" art if it is ever done—turns away sadly or contemptuously. The men who feel something of the mighty struggle, the desperation, the experiment, and the romance of American life in the large, will not enlist when they are appealed to in the interest of an art which they feel to be not only degraded but dishonest.

See, then, how this cult of degradation makes the way hard for every honest experimenter in art. Some one must always blaze new ways. Some one must explore seemingly arid fields. Some one must make incursions into the sewer, even—when he feels sure that art is lighting his hazardous path. But who will be inclined to give any experimenter a fair chance when those who unshrinkingly proclaim themselves to be

the only true experimenters always round up in the same dirt of life? For the interested public, the simplicity of the adventure becomes too great! Always there is temptation to look behind experiment for a motive that is not the artistic one. So the honest crusader, when he does appear, is always confronted with a public predisposed to disregard his honesty of intent. He is treated as though all new art were necessarily inconsequential, often nasty, and always abnormal.

The second obstacle to a widely quickened spirit of artistic expression is the museum habit of mind—that is, the habit of scrupulously associating art with some kind of inclosure for exhibition purposes. How this habit of mind has become well-nigh universal in America is not difficult to see. Our national culture is a creation, not a growth. In order to have any art at all ready to hand, we had to huddle it together in strategic places. Then we began to educate the people in the appreciation of art—by means of examples from the museum. Naturally enough, most people thought of art as something remote from the everyday world;

few people—few towns, even—could afford a museum.

This habit of mind, the natural outgrowth of a righteous zeal in the interest of art, has come to be an unbelievable force in causing art to be regarded as extraneous to life. One important artist whose passion for years has been to have many people enjoy art and produce art, has gone so far as to advocate the closing of museums to all except artists and students of the history of art, in order that the people might come to think of art aright. Of course, the danger would be that they might cease to think about it at all. Yet there is much ground for his contention. A young man goes from a small town, or from the country, to see some art. He enters the museum, an able custodian in brass buttons sells him a catalogue, and he plunges into the maze of form and color. Once in ten thousand times he will be so much of an artist at heart that not even this overwhelming array can daunt him; in the other nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine cases he will be suffocated, confounded, or filled with an inferior resentment. But he does not come to town often; this is art that he is seeing; it is in a museum;

and for social reasons, if no other, he ought to like it. Everywhere about him he sees people who do.

And should he tour Europe, he would see the galleries there in precisely the same spirit. He finds art only in conglomerate huddles. He looks at it not to lose himself in rapt contemplation, not to be lifted from the routine of his daily life into disinterested ecstasy, but to identify, as a schoolboy identifies flowers for a lesson in botany. So he returns from this supposed liberalizing experience more confirmed than ever in his habit. On his journeys, as the chateaux and village churches flew by him he did not think of them as "art" at all. Art is something for exhibition purposes at a fixed price per person.

This habit of mind would not be so harmful if it resulted only in the regarding of art as a part of a museum. But the converse is just as true. It regards things outside a museum as not art. Outside a museum there is no label to guide one. If the museum-minded person were to come upon an unlabeled Tintoretto in a dingy cabin in Snake Hollow or on Bristle Ridge, he would be unable to say whether it was a work

of art or not. Should any question at all concerning it arise in his mind, it would be as to whether or not this picture were an original or a copy. Probably the simple question of his liking it would not arise; and if it should do so, he would be obliged to give himself an evasive answer. How is he to know? Certainly no one would expect him to be attracted by it as a child is held rapturous by anything which affords a high degree of emotional integration.

This is the artistic habit of mind in America outside the larger centers. And sometimes one need not go outside the larger centers to find it! It makes of the so-called cultured classes a group of passive appreciators. It influences institutions of higher learning so that most of them do not attempt to offer courses that unfold the creative spirit and make art vital by making it a matter of participation, but, instead, courses in the appreciation of museums. It influences the man in the street so that he bewilderingly observes, "Well, I like to go round and look at that picture once in a while—just stand and look at it. But I don't know whether it is a work of art or not." Its entire influence, so far as the uninitiated are

concerned, is to make art seem remote. Art springs from somewhere, to be sure; but not from anywhere close to their own daily lives.

Not that I would belittle the museum. Would that we had numberless additional ones, and that they might be better than any we now possess! Their function could be extended without undue effort so that some of them might serve chiefly in showing the people how they could use artistically such modest materials as they may have at their disposal. But thus far, their influence upon the creative spirit has been most properly as an historical record, and as a workshop for the initiated. This influence, though definite, is restricted to a relatively small number. And sometimes it has not been so efficacious in moving people to new and vigorous expression in art, as in determining social supremacy at the dinner table. Art is sought as a hallmark of culture, as something fine to be busied with, as a cudgel to be used in commanding respect. Small wonder that so many think seldom and little of a widely disseminated art impulse such as might help to convert men's spirits and the world into something of which we need not be ashamed!

II

When we turn to consider the arts which have stimulated the creative spirit importantly, we find that they are the ones which have least encountered these obstacles, and have been looked upon by a great many people as a normal activity that has sprung from some yearning of everyday life. Conversely, the ones which have appealed least to creative-minded persons the country over are the ones that have been very consciously thought of as art, as something removed.

It was, for instance, long taken for granted—and in most rural communities is still taken for granted—that the study of art meant the study of painting. Sometimes it included sculpture, but not often and not importantly in the art schools which young ladies attended in the latter half of the nineteenth century; for sculpture requires the study of the nude, and the schools might have been closed—certainly, if they were connected with colleges—by the irate parents of these young ladies, had the word gone abroad that they were doing nude figures. Painting was more simply managed, as anyone can see by referring to the catalogues and illustrated circulars

sent out by the less cosmopolitan and more academic schools of that time. In the numerous "art departments" where it was taught, it rarely developed any strong virtues or any robust vices that would cause people to take it seriously. It was "just art."

As a result of this feeling and practice, and the only half-open doors to young ladies who wished to enter the more "masculine" fields of academic study, the young ladies painted pictures. Go to the attics of tens of thousands of Middle Western homes to-day—and in many instances to the stuffy, unused parlor—and you can collect carloads of such paintings. Go to the dingiest household in the seclusion of the Ohio or Indiana hills, and you will find there the same kind of "art." That family had no daughter in an art school, but "an artist" painted pictures in the show window of the largest store in the town not far away, and allowed everyone who would to observe him at his work. He painted his picture upside down in order the further to mystify his public who stood outside the window. When he had finished, he flopped the picture gracefully over on the easel, and there stood a noble deer looking across a silvery

lake at mountains which stood up as regularly as inverted ice-cream cones. And the public bought his "works of art" at one dollar and fifty cents a picture, frame included.

Those who view the dusty highways of life from a comfortable office in the top of a sky-scraper are always in danger of forgetting that just such trivialities in education have given the rural and small-town Americans—and that means most Americans, even yet—whatever background of artistic tradition they possess. When it is remembered that these communities have provided that middle-class life so often appealed to in the name of art, it can be understood why the mythical but very real average American has never looked upon art as a matter of life and death. And when he is often helped by the cult of degradation to see that art is not only trivial but unwholesome, his relatively sound prejudices direct him elsewhere for emotional experience.

Two arts, however, have established a right foundation for rapid and permanent growth. These are architecture and the drama.

By good fortune, all of the preliminary requirements for an architectural renaissance in America have been met. We have had the neces-

sary material prosperity to encourage both business and individuals to build to their liking; we have had a sufficiently long period of training in the fundamentals as they are taught in other countries; we have developed powerful and efficacious schools of structural engineering; and as parts of the most vigorous universities and schools of technology, we have at last many high-grade schools of architecture. So we have everything happily working for an architecture which is sound in tradition, yet which springs from the necessities and temper of American life. Men want buildings and they want them high; but they also want them good looking. They intrust their ideas to an architect who proposes a towerlike skyscraper which, despite all the scoffing of Europeans at characteristic American sky line, must in its recent developments be regarded as an object of beauty and majesty. Singularly enough, the American business man seems to feel little of his universal genius when he contemplates building; he is usually ready to give the architect something approaching a fair chance. These same business men want houses in which to live. Frequently one man and his family must have three or four! Here again the com-

mercial genius stands ready to recognize not only the competence but the necessity of the architect's advice. So the architect has ridden on the tide of material prosperity to a position where he can actually express idealism in his work.

Fortunately, too, he does not restrict himself to planning skyscrapers and mansions for millionaires. He designs school buildings and hospitals for cities and towns, he designs chapels for villages—though none too frequently—and he places his services at the disposal of tens of thousands of farmers and modest laborers who would build, and who have come to think a little about building as beautifully as possible. Sometimes the architect has gone so far as to override the politician and design beautiful government buildings! His way is not a triumphal procession, of course. Yet he occupies the position of being an idealist who makes the materialist like idealism, and who makes him pay for it. His dream is not too far separated from the materialist's life. There it is, vast and brilliant, towering to the skies.

And best of all, the architect's evangelization is reaching every corner of the country, so that architecture is becoming more and more a normal

part of everyone's thinking. Not only hundreds of thousands of readers, but millions, see periodicals each month which print drawings and elevations of types of houses that might interest a prospective builder. These plans, to be sure, are not always the best possible ones; and if all of the readers were to adopt them when they built, the uniformity would be noticeable. But these matters are more or less beside the point. The people are thinking architecture; and from all of the thought there must spring more and more houses that are not only habitations, but in some slight degree works of art. Daily their occupants may look upon them—must look upon them; and around them must center all the most intimate associations of a lifetime. This, in truth, is making art a part of the life of the people. Incidentally, it is developing among the people a feeling for the one art that helps all the others to attain the architectonic significance without which art remains only a kind of fancy-work.

The record of the drama, the second art that has so rapidly come to be looked upon as a normal kind of activity in America, is scarcely less encouraging. No one could deny that the career of the American people has been dramatic in the

sense that it has been adventurous, picturesque, full of demands for resourcefulness, and, it must be said without shrinking, full of demands for the kind of "acting" that will get a man "by." Yet, in the main, only producers of plays of no high social standing, and such vivid interpreters of American life as Buffalo Bill, dared to think of this material as the stuff of which drama is made. The sophisticated commercial theater oscillated between burlesque and "imported masterpieces"; the sophisticated college communities read Shakespeare, and occasionally, if the religious denomination in control were not too hostile, performed "The Merchant of Venice." Youth is always ready to become dramatic; but because the theater so frequently scandalized the people—notably in the smaller centers—who turned to it for amusement, there was often an open hostility toward anything that pertained to stage production. When we reflect that students in American colleges were disciplined for having gone to see so recent a play as "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," we may be able to see how slowly denominational colleges relinquished their hold on the dramatic inclinations of their students. And to-day I know of at least one vigorous col-

lege where Shakespeare is the only playwright who has the honor to be represented on the college stage.

Nevertheless, some of the colleges did begin to think of drama as something that might have a place outside the recitation room. And American colleges are so constituted that if the champion of a new cause can only prove that some other college has espoused it, no matter where or under what circumstances, he can enlist virtually all of them. So under the pressure of the dramatically inclined students, institutions began to accept the drama as a matter of some importance. They were cheered on their way sometimes by learning that some college professor had actually written a play that would "work" on the stage—such as William Vaughn Moody's "The Great Divide," for instance.

So those few who persisted in asking why we might not have an American drama found themselves supported in an unexpected quarter. Here were bodies of young instructors and students in colleges and universities who saw in the writing and production of plays more than a mere opportunity to laugh at local celebrities who appeared in the glare of the footlights.

In this college movement for a drama of national life, many tireless men and women have given their intelligence, their utmost energy, and their long-suffering patience. Professor George P. Baker has done more, unquestionably, than any other college man of his time. He also bears the distinction of being, so far as I know, the most maligned man who ever attempted to do anything for American art. When he decided to try the experiment of play production in an important way, he was railed at by commercial producers, he was denounced by the professional critics, he was sneered at by academic colleagues. Some of his critics found it so difficult to express an adequate contempt for him and his work that they had to draw upon the resources of foreign tongues. Newspaper reporters in New York and elsewhere manufactured interviews in which he was made to say the most absurd things imaginable about play production and playwriting. Men who had never seen one of his performances or read one of the plays written by his students, glibly made sarcastic remarks about this man who was "trying to make dramatists by formula." It became the thing to do; it revealed one's superior artistic standing. Most of all to

be regretted, some of those who were privileged to be guests at his "Workshop" performances did not see the serious significance of what he was attempting.

But he persisted. And now, after his fifteen years of fighting for what often must have seemed a lost cause, few men could have greater satisfaction in the fruitage of their labors. We have, as a direct result, a number of young playwrights who have higher standards of technique and a clearer vision of what the dramatist may attempt than they otherwise could have had. This, I believe it should be said to his credit, has been his smallest contribution. We have, in the second place, a group of professional producers who are less unready to believe that something may sometimes be learned. We have—and this seems to me his greatest contribution—an entire nation dotted over with his disciples, and with the disciples of other college men to whom he gave comfort when they were less strategically situated than he was, who have undertaken all sorts of dramatic experiments. Go to New Mexico, to Minnesota, to Kansas, to Illinois, to California, to New York State, to North Carolina, to Texas, and you will find his followers in new centers of

dramatic activity. Their followers, in turn, are taking the drama—a better drama than otherwise would have been possible—to small towns, to church festivals, to consolidated rural schools. One of his students has been directing the production of plays—good plays—at county fairs; and he has had success. Men and women who never before had seen a play worth seeing, and probably none at all, have, right at their own agricultural fairs, caught something of the significance of drama.

Now when we see how such work as this—and Professor Baker is only the most distinguished pioneer in a large and goodly company—must inevitably carry new and direct interest in the drama to all sorts of people in many places, it is not difficult to understand why young men and women are everywhere attempting to express the life they know, a really dramatic life, in the form of plays. Not only that; they are producing these plays, and the very people about whom they write are discovering that there is something dramatic and elevated in their own lives. It was about the plays written by one such group of young men and women and acted before the mountaineers of their own state that

one of the dramatic critics of New York recently said: "He [Professor Frederick H. Koch, who directed the work] is probably doing more to develop an American drama than all the producers and importers in this city."

Other subsidiary activities have grown from this community experience—masques and pageants and interpretative historical processions. And related to this movement, in spirit if not in origins, is the interesting career of the non-academic Little Theater, by means of which not only young actors, but young playwrights, have encouragement in a kind of theater which is not commercial, yet which is more and more nearly approximating the best commercial producers' standards of skill.

This, to be sure, is a simplified presentation of the case. No one believes that an American drama is made. There is much groping, much floundering; but there is also much intelligent effort which promises something in twenty or fifty or a hundred years. In the meantime, whatever may be the explanation, it is possible to say that the center of the theatrical world has been shifted to America. Certainly no one who has been in London recently can say that it is any

longer there. We have begun to think drama, to feel drama; drama has become a passion; it seems to be a very normal means of expression; and when any art is thus looked upon, it develops a substantial vigor which can never be found in the art that is looked upon clearly as an exotic.

III

This singling out of two of the arts for specific mention does not imply that the others are without life. Poetry, which stands next to these on the right groundwork for a national growth, has become one of the important arts among us with such unobtrusiveness that we are in danger of forgetting its vigor. A dozen years ago, so few people read contemporary poetry that most publishers shunned manuscripts of verse as though they were books of perdition—which, financially, they usually were. To-day a young poet may have the good fortune to sell ten thousand copies in one year. And the young who are expressing themselves in verse with sincerity and beauty, and often with distinction, are numerous. If anyone inclined to be skeptical of all things contemporary should wish to see whether

or not we are more fortunately established to make progress in poetry than we were twenty-five years ago, let him turn back to the magazines, the weeklies, and other periodicals then current, and spend an hour among the undistilled conceptions and jaded adjectives; then let him read the verse, not of those whose place has been accepted in American letters for many years, but of the young poets who have appeared within a decade: Edna St. Vincent Millay, Du Bose Heyward, Hervey Allen, Elinor Wylie, Muna Lee, Herbert Gorman, Joseph Auslander, Stephen Benét, Maxwell Bodenheim, Robert Hillyer, Foster Damon, Allen Crafton, Eloise Robinson, and others that can be omitted only with unfairness. Or if he wishes to get the perspective of a longer period, let him turn back, for instance, to the Forget-Me-Not books of 1826 or 1828, read there the verse of such young writers as Longfellow, N. P. Willis, James G. Percival, and George D. Prentice, and determine whether we have not in a hundred years come to a more genuine practice of the art of verse. Some one may protest—some one always may—that we need more writers with breadth of vision. To this it may be replied that the conditions are now benef-

icent, and if they remain so for a time, the impartial laws of chance will give us poets with all variety of outlook. The important matter is that we have arrived at the stage where poets, and all sorts of non-commercial magazines of verse, can actually get a hearing.

An excellent case could be made for the other arts. Painting is still looked upon as something exotic; but with such interesting enterprises as "circulating libraries" of paintings in New Mexico and elsewhere, added to the distinguished work of many American painters, painting will gain in favor. So will music, although we have the distinction just now of hearing the best performers in the world and doing far less in composition than in several of the other arts—possibly than in any of them.

But architecture and drama point the way, because they have induced artistic stirrings among the people who most need art and who, in turn, will make artistic expression most robust. This problem of building the arts upon the life of the country as it is must be faced by all of the arts. If they do that, the provincial-minded politician need not be concerned whether the

young American artist goes abroad to study or remains at home. With many at work in the required high fervor of spirit, American art—which is only another way of saying good art—will everywhere be more in evidence.

VIII: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?

—The Psalmist.

VIII: THE CREATIVE SPIRIT AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

I

If there is one bright untruth which Americans have delighted to promulgate beyond every other, it is that a person of creative mind thrives best when he is scorned, and cuffed about, and underfed, and made to feel that his aspirations have no valid place in the national scheme. About the sacredness of opportunity for all, we have talked much; but whenever a man rises up to show us that he has no fair opportunity, we seek refuge in the doctrine of "overcoming." A man must have plenty of practice in overcoming; it develops his strength of character—when it does not kill him.

Now I am not pleading that there should be any specially made opportunity for the person of creative mind. All that he requires is that he be let alone to go his own way. Nothing in this highest of all privileges can be interpreted to mean that he is to run athwart the entire social

machine, that he is to cultivate queerness for purposes of exhibition, that he is to be freed from all routine in his life, or that he is to be pampered and made over-sleek. Too much attention, it will be remembered, may very readily be as bad as starvation. "The Flight of the Goddess" tells the story of many a young artist of original power. But usually the artist's garret is misunderstood. He thrives there not because he is starved or poorly clothed, but because he is there so generously let alone.

Being let alone, however, is not so simple a matter as it may seem. Strictly speaking, a man may be let alone in a stiff current which sweeps him along to his destruction. But more reasonably, the direction which he is to take ought to depend in some degree on his own choosing; the currents running counter to him must not be too strong or too numerous; he must not be whirled into unproductive dizziness. If he is to make the most of his endowment, he must be let alone with respectfulness and generosity and a certain neighborly kinship. There must be enough people thinking in his general direction, and feeling somewhat as he feels, to make his surroundings into a beneficent world.

II

In order to see to what extent the American public contributes, or might contribute, this beneficent world in which the creative spirit may develop, it is necessary to look into the character of the public with a little scrutiny. It is customary to dismiss the American character with some single, well-turned phrase. Europeans tell one another—and us—that we are "dynamic," that we are "people of action," that we are "egotistic fortune hunters," that we are "practical idealists," or that we are "expansive dreamers"; as a nation, we are this or that or something else, but always something very definite. To those observers, it seems not to have occurred that we might be a many-sided America, with a great variety of conflicting characteristics. Yet, when we look with the slightest penetration, we can see that we are just that. We have become a nation of blocs: we have farm blocs, and labor blocs, and commercial blocs, and oil blocs, and mining blocs, and New England blocs, and Pacific blocs, and the solid South, and leagues of women voters, and negro improvement societies, and the Ku Klux Klan. Not only is the coun-

try so expansive in area that there can be no close solidarity of feeling on most matters, but the elements that make up the population in many places are so little coherent that we have newspapers in fifteen or twenty different languages published in one city; we have race riots because one race dares to purchase real estate where customarily only some other race lives; we have zones to prevent workingmen from living too near their employers; we have symphony orchestras and—a few blocks away—"the people's " symphony orchestras. Everywhere, the tendency to specialize has put life into watertight compartments. It would be marvelous indeed to find in this maze of activity and prejudice any great unanimity of feeling toward the creative spirit.

And the first important fact to be remembered is that no unanimity of feeling is found. There are at least three publics with rather sharp lines —characteristically sharp lines—marking the bounds of the groups. The first, a comparatively small group, might be called the cultivated idealists. These come not from one social class; they are the brave spirits whose idealism is enough to bind them together. They are the unhardened

of the village and town school-teachers, the widows of music masters and barristers—perhaps with sons or daughters to educate; the judges who look with understanding upon the culprits brought before them; the surgeons who have a background of culture; the less academic college professors; the more liberal of the ministers; the journalists; the artists; and the occasional millionaire who developed the creative spirit while he made his millions. These are ready to see anyone make a fair experiment in city planning, in architecture, in music, in the drama, in landscape reconstruction. They are the ones, moreover, who give the most hearty and disinterested encouragement to the new social enterprises which have as an end the liberating of the spirit of those who are cast down. All honest creative enterprise they are willing to support with a right sentiment, and with such financial power as they possess.

Then there is the very large group—much the largest of the three—which roughly coincides with "the lower classes" in the made-to-order social scale. Here are the unskilled workingmen —the men who own little houses, possibly, and hoe in the garden after supper; the department-

store salesmen; the office help; the chief body of small-town residents; the smaller farmers; the young women operatives in countless factories—all those struggling, intelligent human beings who would find it difficult to make ends meet in a comfortable suburb. These go with regularity to the movies and accept what is provided—they must get away somewhere; they occasionally go to hear some popular musician who is known to them through the radio; and they go to theaters patronized chiefly by their own social class and see stock companies present ripping melodramas, and they shed copious genuine tears in the last act. These live so close to the unadorned facts of life that they are fitted to become a great appreciative public for the best that the creators can do; but they have rarely been treated as a public of major importance.

The third public consists of the fairly large group who are known to Europeans—Europeans who have stayed much in their own countries—as Americans. These have amassed sufficient earthly possessions to free them from many of the less pleasant facts of life. They live in country places of unquestioned ease, and often of unquestioned beauty; they move over the face

of the earth without hindrance in their efforts to keep always at the point of mean average temperature; they bring forth a small family of children whom they "educate" with a C- average at the most socially important college for men and the most socially important college for women; they subscribe for grand opera at fifteen dollars a seat, but are "too busy" to go—they are the ones who cause courts to rule grand opera a luxury; they maintain a polite but somewhat patronizing attitude toward the salaried chemist in their firm who brings them hundreds of thousands of dollars—he is listed on the payroll as office help; they say "Oh-oh-h" with a rise in the middle and a drop at the end whenever they meet anyone whose life does not slip immediately into their easy classification. These are forever and not unpleasantly active in a superficial way which makes thinking unnecessary.

The members of this public are very important socially. And so completely have we confused social rating with power to create, that we have thus far treated them as if they were in all respects more important than any other group. They have a goodly supply of wealth. Why should they not, therefore, contribute to the sup-

port of creative work? How "beautifully democratic" to have a partnership between those who can create and those who are blessed with money but can create nothing! Every effort must be made to "interest" this over-nourished class in creative enterprise. They possess the power to help so much that they are really more important than the creators themselves!

Now this plan might result fruitfully were not one point conveniently overlooked: the people of this class have developed a state of mind in which it is impossible for them to be interested in creative work. They have become consumers of life and are unable longer to see things from the creator's point of view. Any capacity to experience the thrill of pioneering has been thoroughly smothered. All matters must for them become questions of personal or social satiation. If the man reputed to be the most distinguished poet in America is to be a guest in their city, they will aspire to sit near him and be known as his friends, although they have read none of his poetry. They will sometimes go further and support enterprises avowedly creative if there is a sufficient social justification for so doing. If some one speaks—backed by enough well-known

patronesses—on the tonic effects of a creative vocation, they will subscribe to a hospital in which neurasthenics are provided with something interesting to do. They will support teas, dances, commissions, offices, surveys, collectors, custodians, all in the name of art; and they will help to pack off European masterpieces, or pseudo masterpieces, from where they obviously belong, and share in the burying of them—spiritually, if not physically—in some American collection where they just as obviously do not belong. All of these activities have a social significance and therefore can be evaluated.

But when the trappings are put aside, and the sheer question of enabling the creative spirit to live comes bluntly up for consideration, are the members of this powerful public seriously concerned? Have they ever become evangelical in their efforts to set the industrial laborer more or less free to live a normal life? Are they zealously at work on any plans whereby the history of mankind would cease to be, as Emerson said it was, "the history of arrested growth?" Have they enough concern for the development of an American art to give the least encouragement to boys and girls who possess a fine artistic impulse

but suffer from crushing social disregard? Many instances which one might draw upon would serve to answer these questions; but there is one which is so important in American life and so characteristic of the best American endeavor, that it must be used.

In the hills of New Hampshire there exists a retreat for creative workers which was established more than fifteen years ago in memory of America's most beloved composer—after he had given his best to unsympathetic "employers" of the kind I am discussing, and had come to a tragic death. His widow knew the value of a right environment for the creative worker, and she wanted serious young artists and potential artists to taste the fullness of a place where work might go on without interruption, and with stimulus and unpretentious encouragement on every hand. So the MacDowell Colony has grown in vigor and in the esteem of everyone who really knows what it is all about. There are no trappings; it it a place for hard work. Visitors who come highly expectant to see young ladies in brilliant plumage draped over the hillsides composing sonnets or wielding a brush and palette while admiring male patrons of art look on, are invariably dis-

appointed. Instead, there are a score of comfortable studios scattered throughout a five-hundred acre tract of farmland and woodland where men and women of serious artistic intention go quietly in the morning, before most of their friends in the city are out of their beds, and give themselves to a day of uninterrupted work. The landscape has none of the high tension of an "art center." The farmers are busy looking after the hay and the corn and the vegetables. Occasionally a woman of late middle years drives through the woodland roads in a dog-cart, her face buried in the shadow of a "mushroom" hat as she labors with some problem of keeping the Colonists comfortable. A mile away rises the faint sound of a piano in the depths of the spruce trees as some composer works for hours with undivided mind. Not even the lunch hour calls one away from work; for lunch is left very quietly at the door of the studio. One need return to the company of one's fellows only at dinner time in the early evening unless one's run of work is exhausted before.

Here is the heaven of which every serious worker in the arts has often dreamed. Here are men and women working without regard for

union rules, working because they must, working because they believe they have a vital experience to express and are here free to express it. No enterprise in America is doing more for the young poet, the young composer, the young playwright, or the young painter—and often for the old ones, too—than this Colony. No enterprise is doing so much to disabuse the public mind of the assumption that American art and Greenwich Village are inseparable! No enterprise expresses more perfectly the high unselfishness that should actuate much of American life.

Yet how deeply are the well-groomed, instinct-satisfying class of Americans interested in such a high enterprise? They roll regally through by the thousands every summer, and hope they may have the good fortune to see "a live one." If at some odd hour they are luckily admitted to a studio, they smile in passive wonderment; or, if women, they find all things uniformly "quaint" or "wonderful" or "picturesque." It all means just as much as any other kind of exhibit would. And as for investing some of their unused money in it, so that the woman who manages it might be freed from some of her endless perplexities, they "cannot see it"; there are few places for the

exhibition of the names of donors. When they invest money they want to know what they are going to get out of it. They would put a nickel in the slot and draw out a full-fledged artist, with no blanks—because they are so much more familiar with slot machines than the ways of art.

So the enterprise continues to receive its sole contributions from occasional idealists who because of their idealism can see from the creator's point of view: from music-teachers and their pupils in Indiana or California or South Carolina or Nebraska or Oklahoma, who give their dollars with joy; from former Colonists who go from the earth and appreciatively leave to the Colony everything they possessed; from the farmers and carpenters on the Colony grounds, who have caught the spirit of devotion and work with a fidelity and foresight which amounts to thousands of dollars and very much more. And each year the woman who has consecrated her life to this means of rendering America a fitter place to live in must go out and earn and beg enough to make up the fifteen thousand dollars or so of annual deficit.

Now the creative spirit and the American public are represented in this instance with more than

passing faithfulness. Here stands revealed the clear division between the most hopeless part of the American public and the most hopeful. Here stands revealed the falsity of the supposition that the great well-groomed class are the financial supporters of anything really creative. Such work is supported by a few millionaires who have found a creative life in the making of millions—or have carried on some other creative activity while engaged in business—and by people of small means but great devotion. Here stands revealed also the kind of intelligent enlightening of the public which must precede any high development of the creative spirit in this country.

And yet throughout the organized life of the nation, chief consideration continues to be centered upon the overfed, unproductive, and but passively appreciative group. The members of this group, it must be remembered, are living always from the point of view of consuming, of satisfying themselves; therefore, they are always asking for something and are very much heard. They are listened to when legislation is proposed. They are generously considered in every detail of higher education—so much so, in fact, that many colleges could almost close the offices which

they devote to discipline were it not for the irresponsible offspring of this class. They are always remembered when anything is to be done in the name of art; they are certain to be included in all important lists, and they well know the reason why.

Worse still, this part of the American public, somehow displayed as though it were the best that might be expected of a democracy, is encouraged on every hand to perpetuate itself. The important institutions of national life—an over-organized, briskly respectable church, an impersonal higher education, a deadening though quickly profitable industrial scheme, a science which has lent itself easily to a flat life of the senses, and an art that has been more or less detached—all these contribute to a smooth, regular, colorless, unimaginative sort of person who never wants to be disturbed by coming to grips with anything real.

III

If, then, we are to have a public that will look beneficently upon the creative spirit, whether this spirit appear modestly or in genius, we must

shift the center of educative efforts. Not that I would have any group neglected; it is not utterly impossible to make a little headway even with those of the uninspired class about which I have spoken. But their pampered conception of their own importance, and their inoculation with a smattering of conventional lore, make them the most difficult class of all to bring to the point of view of those who would create. On the other hand, the believing idealists who yet remain in institutions of learning, and skilled workers in the crafts, and journalists, and those poetic business men who through the adventure of constructive enterprise have found a kinship with all workers, and the men who toil in the fields and reflect upon the dramatic expression of life everywhere about them, and housewives who have little social prestige yet who suffer sublimely and have, therefore, a life open to the influence of art—all these, to say nothing of the intelligent, alert children of every rank, might be brought together into a great and sufficient public.

If we are not shamming, but are really interested in the hazardous problems of the kind of democracy we have developed, we must find ways of bringing together the elements of this better

public. They must be encouraged in what is at once as sound a philosophy of life for themselves as one can propose, and the only guaranty of a right attitude on their part toward the creative spirit in others. It is only by thus developing the various slight degrees of the creative in the amateur that the more professional creators may have a hearing. The amateur spirit always lends an attentive ear, even when it cannot comprehend fully. Especially must the sensitive, the high-minded among the lower economic classes be dealt with tactfully. Despite all that is said about the low intelligence of these classes, they have usually a right prejudice in matters which affect them closely. The tragedy of their lives, so far as their attitude toward any higher expression of the creative spirit is concerned, is that they have been so frequently exploited by the charlatan in social science, so often humiliated by ambitious women of excessive embonpoint who have conceived the generous idea of carrying art "right down to the people," that they are suspicious of all paternalistic schemes from afar. What they need is not service, not something designedly humanitarian, but the spiritual comradeship which always springs up when men struggle

together in a growing, creative enterprise. They are quick to feel genuineness, and if they are genuinely treated, not as patients, but as fellow-beings, they will respond by contributing substantially toward a public in which creators in general may feel at home.

It is necessary, for at least two good reasons, to break into the vicious circle by encouraging a changed attitude on the part of creators themselves, and those whose function it is to interpret what the creators do. The first of these two reasons is very important: the creators and their interpreters constitute such a small group when compared with the public, and they are so much more conscious of their function, that they can more readily take the initiative. But the second reason is more important still: the attitude of many of those engaged in creative work, and of many more of those who profess to illuminate what the creator has done, is an artificial one—consequently a wrong one—and should be changed.

It does not follow that the creators should spend their best time in trying to get on good terms with the public. In truth, it is doubtful whether the creator should ever spend any very

considerable part of his time in interpreting himself. But where creators are numerously associated together, as in the larger cities, they are in constant danger of forgetting that the public exists. In truth, what they reveal to the public is usually not any of the genuineness which they possess at heart, but certain social qualities which they have been led to understand are expected in them. Artists, who are much thought of as the typical creators, complain that the public is unappreciative, yet continue unwittingly to slap the public in the face. All of the friendly feeling which creative work engenders they concentrate on their friends; and their friends extend very little out into the public. They let the public—the potentially beneficent public—understand that they are creating something which cannot be comprehended save by a few of the initiated ones. And sometimes it cannot! Scientists, who have an abundance of comradeship for other creative workers, sometimes chuckle over the manner in which they have mystified some naïve workman or some woman perplexed over the "problem of existence," and suppose that they are maintaining the dignity of their position. In fact, they have carried their attitude of indifferent dis-

dain so far that many of their own number are now pleading that they consider their ways, lest a hostile public seriously retard scientific progress. These classes of creators too little bear in mind that, whether they like it or not, they must live at the hands of the public, and that if this public should enforce its indiffierence sufficiently, the creators would find living difficult enough.

Likewise the interpreters of the creators must experience a perpetual new birth. I believe the critic ought to have the freest hand in doing what he likes; and it is not the sole function of criticism to inform the uninformed. But if anybody wishes to find one more good reason why the creative spirit has not leavened more of the whole lump in America, let him leaf through a month's output of criticism—criticism of "life" as well as of music and painting and letters—and ask himself how well most of it is designed to enlist the sympathetic attention of those who are unenlightened and alienated. It is interesting enough to have a kind of creative merry-go-round in which creators write with the critics in mind and the critics write with the creators and each other in mind; but such writing increases the size of the circle with painful slowness. An interesting ex-

periment could be performed by turning some kind of emotional X-ray on the hearts of critics and observing how many of them had used Turgeniev's *The Fool* as a model in their work, and how many had taken up their work with an honest warmth of fellow-feeling for those whom they professedly address.

I am not of that group who decry everything critical in America. The experiment I have proposed would reveal many hearts moved by an honest intent to be understood by those who are as yet without the circle. Nevertheless, if we are interested in the creative spirit, here is the weak spot in our criticism: not enough effort is made to accept the creator's work just as he has left it, and the public just as it finds itself, and then to bring them to a right understanding of each other so that the creator shall become more a part of the public and the public more a part of the creator. So far as any practicable help for the public is concerned, too many critics write in the manner of the "authority" on social usage who went to a small town to address the women on the etiquette of the dinner table, and began her address by saying that, of course, no

one would think of attempting to serve a meal with less than six servants.

If we take for granted a minimum that is entirely beyond the reach of the people, we cannot expect a very prefound response. On the other hand, if one takes up the task of interpretation with a heart that would be understood, creative-minded people rise up appreciatively in all sorts of unexpected places, ready to contribute to that reciprocal relation which at once makes the public and the creators. Somehow, somewhere, these unobserved people have been endowed with a sensitiveness which is a safe guide in distinguishing between the genuine interpreter and the mere æsthetic irritant.

IV

But why all the bother? Always as one approaches the very end of any discussion which pleads a cause, there are those blessed with a comforting inertia who come forward with one of two questions, such as, in this instance: "Yes, we need much of the creative spirit, but isn't about everything being done that is required?" Or, on the other hand, "It is all bad enough, but

is there really anything that can be done about it?"

As for the first of these questions, the influence on the creative spirit exerted by the important institutions in America—the church, higher education, industry, science, and art—ought to afford a reasonably complete answer. But if there remains the least doubt in the mind of anyone, it can be dissipated by a few months of work in behalf of those who would engage as beginners in any kind of creative enterprise. It is always steadying to turn from mere mental impressions to the concrete facts of current life. Of course, we are not wholly unmindful of the creative spirit; we "appreciate" it if it manifests itself in genius that is dazzling enough. If a young Polish girl acts as governess in a large family for a half-dozen years and slowly earns enough money to live quietly in a Paris attic for a time and study physics and chemistry, and if, after years of sacrifice, she and her husband discover radium and give it to the world, we speak with full throats about the miracles of the creative mind. When she is old, we may even present her with a handsome supply of the precious element she discovered—provided somebody takes

the initiative and works hard enough in raising the necessary funds. But what of the potential young creator who has arrivel at that precarious stage where he may topple so easily either into the increasing brightness of his new world or into the gray darkness of spiritual defeat? How much thought is given to him while he is in the attic stage; or worse still, while he is about to be smothered in a heavy atmosphere of social dawdling? Does anybody think enough about him to help him to topple in the right direction?

Or, to turn to a still more interesting part of the field, who gives any consecutive, long-sighted attention to the task of extending the creative spirit of youth farther on into adult life so that the history of mankind shall not so early in any generation become "the history of arrested growth"? Why is there such an unspeakable chasm between Josephine, our neighbor of eight, and Healy, our ice man of forty, and yet no chasm at all—in fact, a close kinship—between her and the bookbinder of sixty who is also an amateur naturalist? Until such matters as these have everywhere been considered with seriousness and with that persistent continuity which is so difficult in a country committed to the short

view, we cannot look upon our numerous educative enterprises with great respect.

As for the other question—whether anything can really be done about it or not—it can only be said that it is the one matter about which one can always work with positive assurance. The creative spirit is creative. To be sure, whenever anyone sets out to do anything in behalf of this spirit, he is almost certain to be impressed with the seeming waste of much of his effort. If he is strong of heart, perhaps he consoles himself with the observation that nature's methods are always wasteful—though some one, Gabriel Tarde, I believe, has reminded us that they are not wasteful at all, but only generously sure and in clear accord with the mathematical law of chance. But if he is still stronger of heart and can wait, he will see that effort is not wasteful even in this sense; for it has a strange way of bearing fruit in every unexpected place. It was not intended, even, that the music which a composer played in the fastness of his cabin in the forest should so impress the telegraph messenger from the neighboring village that the attitude of the entire village should be changed not only toward the composer, but toward all music; yet it came to pass.

Few would expect that a patent-medicine peddler with a half dozen magazines tucked under the seat of his little covered wagon would send an unlettered country youth away to live forever in his own poetic dreams; yet that also came to pass. No one could have explained very far in advance just how the discovery of radium by Pierre and Marie Curie in Paris was going to contribute to an improved hotel architecture in Minnesota; yet it did so contribute. The radiations of a fertile mind are varied and capricious and subtle, and forever reach across into seemingly unrelated fields and unilluminated dark corners.

No one shall change all in the twinkling of an eye. Only those disillusioned persons who speak about America as "the land of the shimmer of high aspiration and extraordinary nonsense" pretend even to believe that anybody thinks he might. But much may be done to develop some of the sociological conditions in which creative-mindedness may thrive. And while the making of the right sociological conditions will not guarantee a definite flowering out of the particular kind of creative expression in which we are most

interested, we can at least work with a grim assurance that if the conditions are not made right, there will be no flowering out at all. The Samoan Islands, we will remember, did not produce Mozart.

THE END

Date Due

Dec. 77

917.3
B879